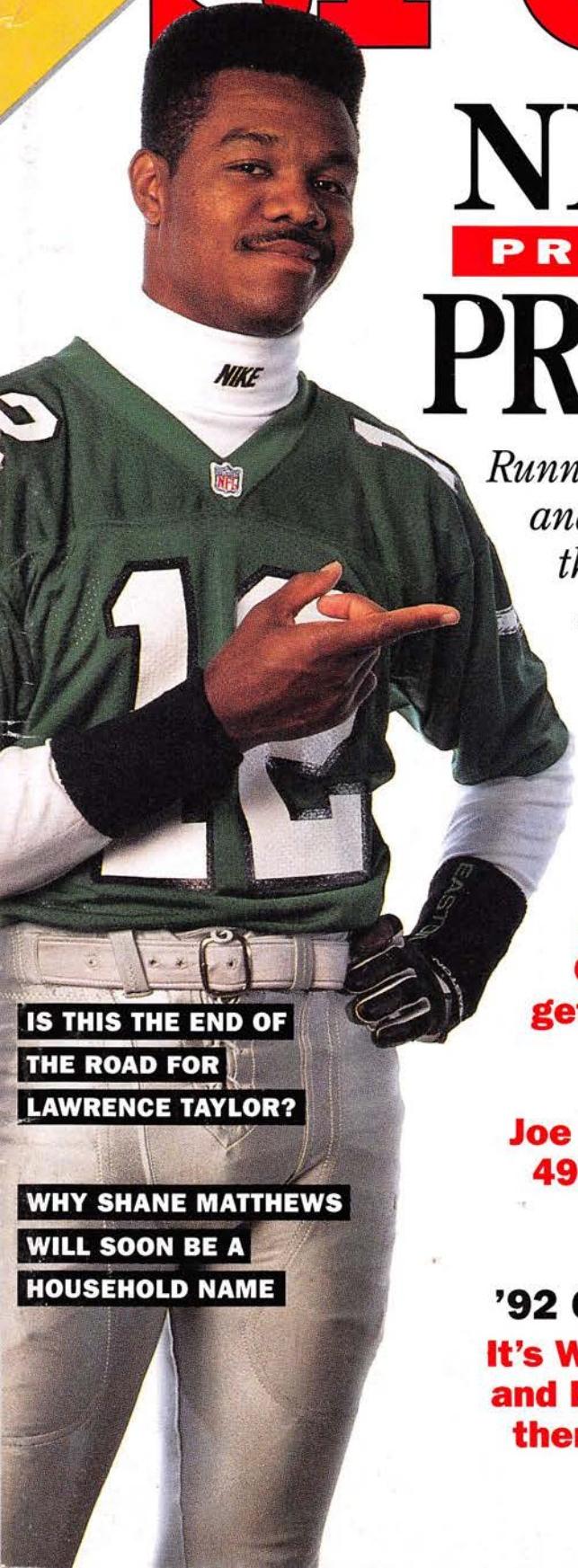


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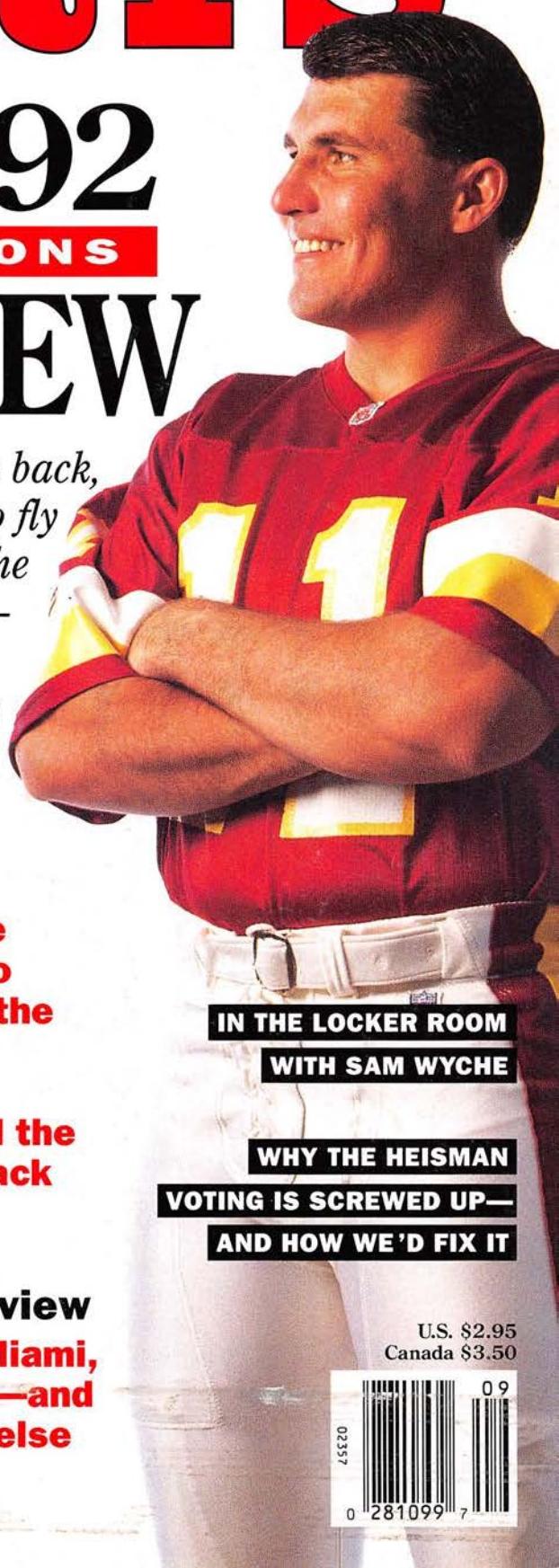
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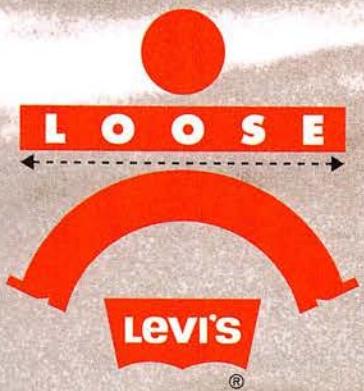


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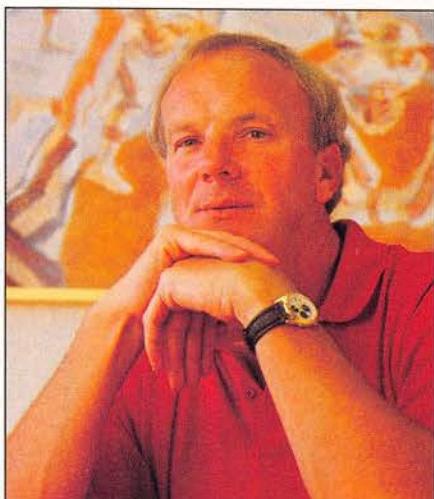


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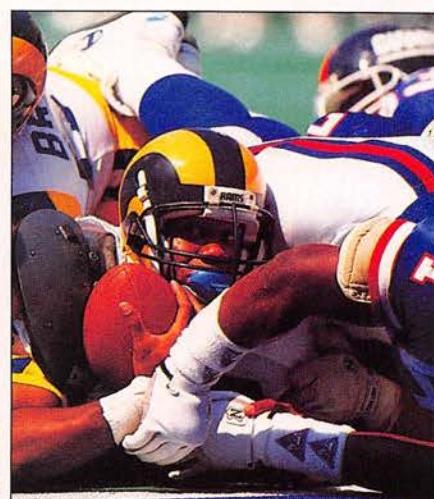




LOOSE FITTING JEANS



The new mouth of the South, page 26



Scoring it the hard way, page 34



College kickoff time, page 60

JON SORBO

FEATURES

26 Interview: Sam Wyche

The NFL's most outspoken coach discusses fear, intimidation, and pro football
By ED WERDER

NFL and College Football Preview

34 AFC: Eight Isn't Enough

The Oilers will stop the Bills—but not the AFC's Super Bowl losing streak
By GREG GARBER

46 NFC: Gang Green

The rejuvenated Eagles will fly all the way for another NFC East Super Bowl title
By GARY MYERS

54 "Can I Still Do It?"

Lawrence Taylor is feeling the clammy grip of advancing age
By GREG GARBER

58 Cut Down By the Clock

Some of the league's biggest stars have joined the Over-the-Hill Gang
By GREG GARBER

60 College Top 25: New Year, Same Story

Washington, Miami, and Florida State are the cream of the college crop—again
By ALLEN BARRA

65 Getting a Hold on the Heisman

Some football programs are abandoning sportsmanship for flashy numbers
By ALLEN BARRA

66 The Quietest Quarterback

Florida's Shane Matthews is too good to be ignored—plus our Heisman consumer guide
By ALLEN BARRA

74 No Hits, No Hype

The Cardinals' Lee Smith keeps a low-profile for a certain Hall-of-Famer
By TRACY RINGOLSBY

10 Editor's Note

14 The Insider

Baseball's Secret Society
To the Losers Go the Spoils
The Battle of the Budget

16 Media

Rolling the Dice on a New Life
By BOB RUBIN

22 Inside Out

24 Pro & Con

Instant replay in the NFL

78 Numbers

80 The Good Doctor

82 The Fan

Touched By the Man Upstairs
By DENNIS MILLER



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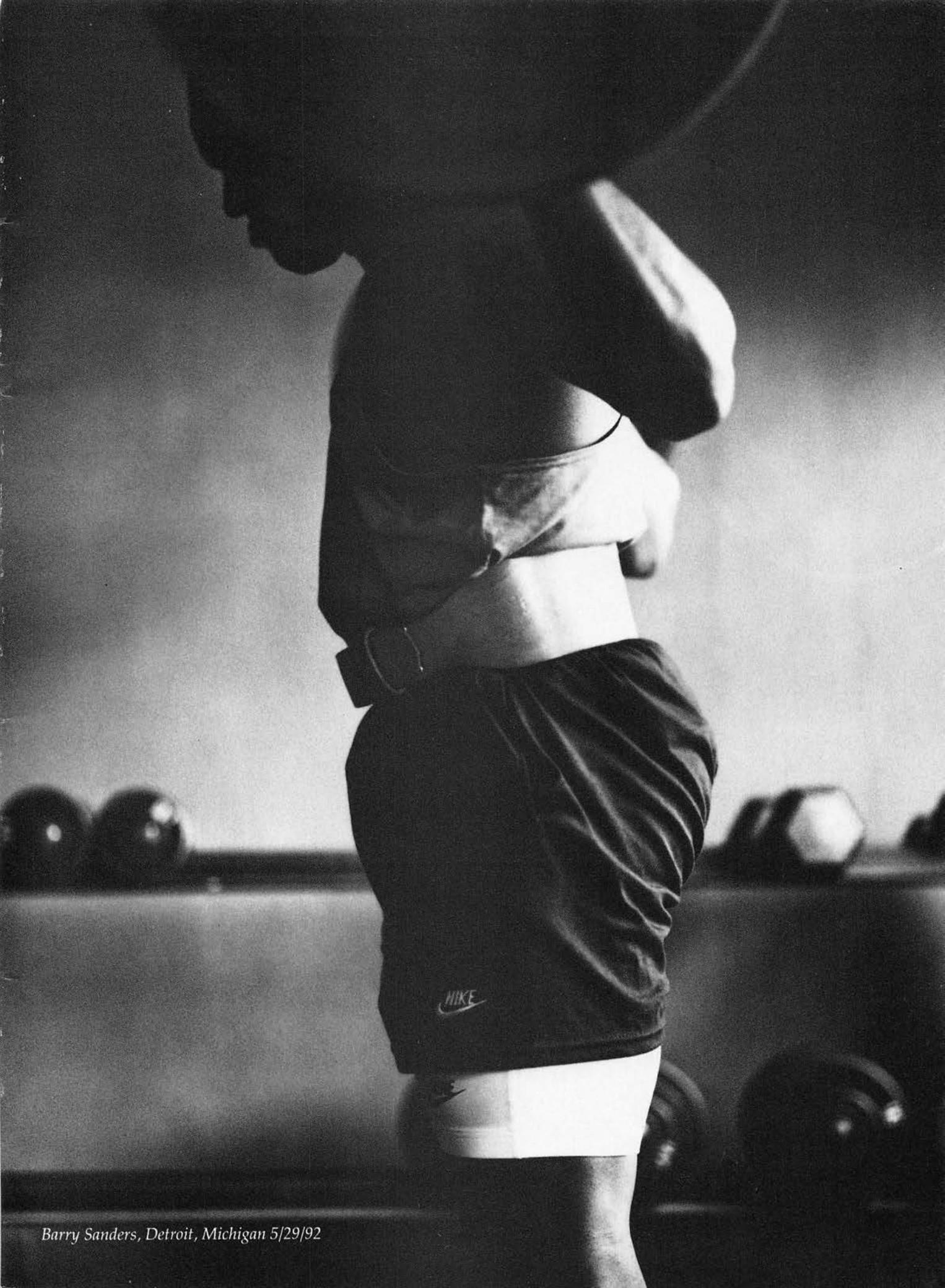
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Michael Johnson, Austin, Texas 6/4/92



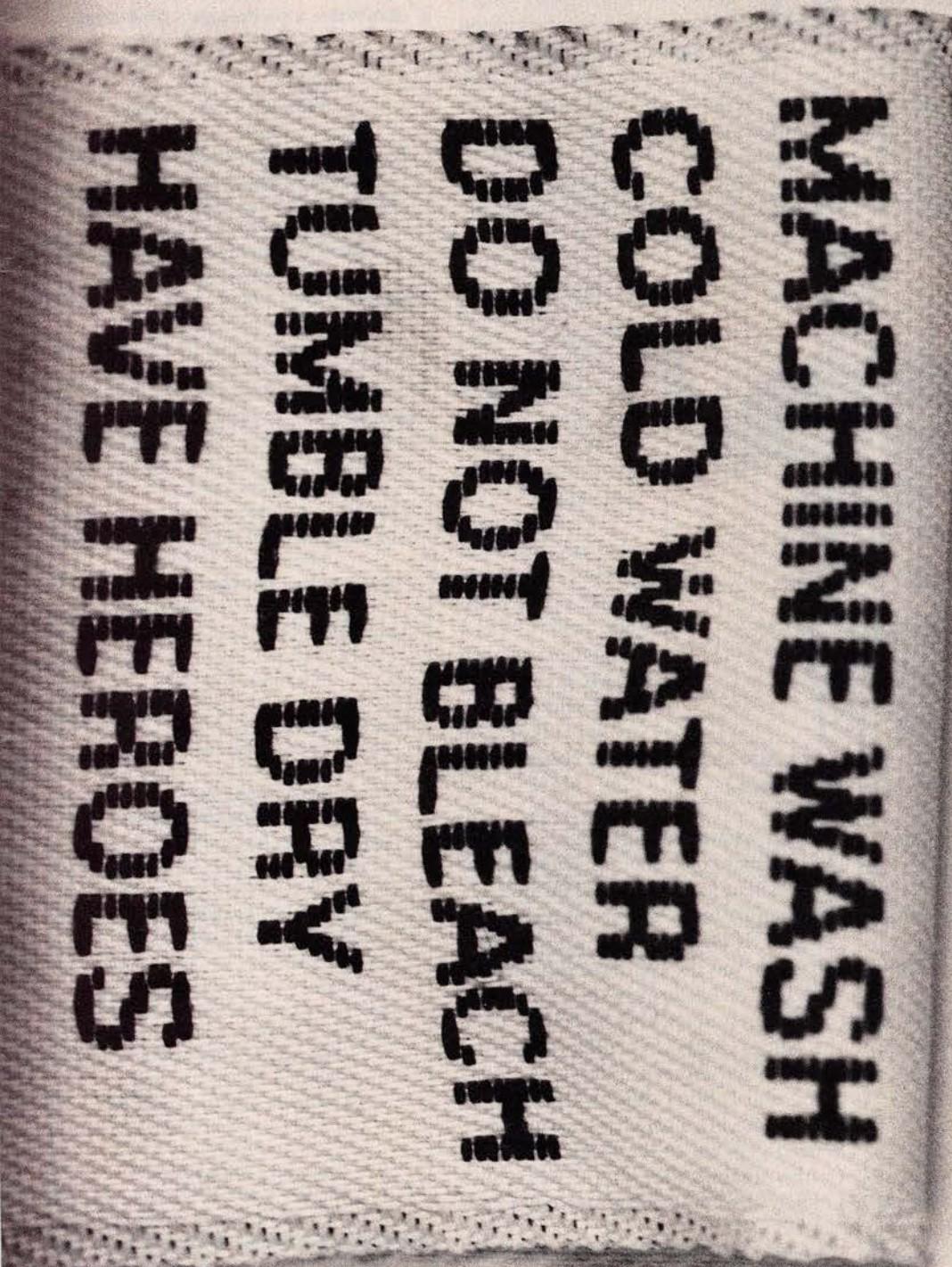
Chris Mullin, San Francisco, California 6/2/92



Barry Sanders, Detroit, Michigan 5/29/92



John Tomac, Durango, Colorado 6/11/92



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I'm coming back, and I'm coming back strong." So says the Eagles' Randall Cunningham, football's version of Rickey Henderson. When healthy, Cunningham is the NFL's most dynamic offensive weapon. Two years ago he passed for 3,466 yards and 30 touchdowns and also rushed for 942 yards, but his '91 season came to an abrupt end just 15 minutes into the opening game—and ironically, Cunningham was injured on a hit while throwing from the pocket. However, even though he was forced to the sidelines for virtually the entire '91 season, Cunningham doesn't foresee any change in his go-for-broke style. "Maybe I won't rush for 900 yards; maybe I won't even rush for 500," he says. "The injury is going to allow me to be a better player. I'm not going to rely on my wheels as much, but I'm not saying I won't do as much running if I have to."

Despite the loss of Cunningham, by last season's end the Eagles were one of the top teams in the league. They finished 10-6 and only missed the playoffs by virtue of a wild-card tie-breaker. Jim McMahon filled in admirably as Cunningham's back-up, but it was the Eagles' ferocious defense that made Philadelphia a power at season's end.

The return of Cunningham, coupled with this defense, makes Philadelphia our choice to win the NFC and meet (and defeat) Houston in the Super Bowl. As our preview beginning on 34 points out, the Eagles will have their toughest test just winning their division.

"I think it's great," says Cunningham of our prediction. "It's just about our time. The guys on the team are dedicated to winning. We knew that last year should have been our time, but there's no shoula, woulda, coulda."

If our forecast is accurate, Cunningham

will finally get to meet his friend, Oilers quarterback Warren Moon, on the playing field. The two signal-callers have built a mutual admiration society. "It's the respect we have for each other," says Cunningham. "We each know what the other has gone through to make it. Warren went to the Canadian Football League to prove himself, and I started my career in Philadelphia only playing on third down.

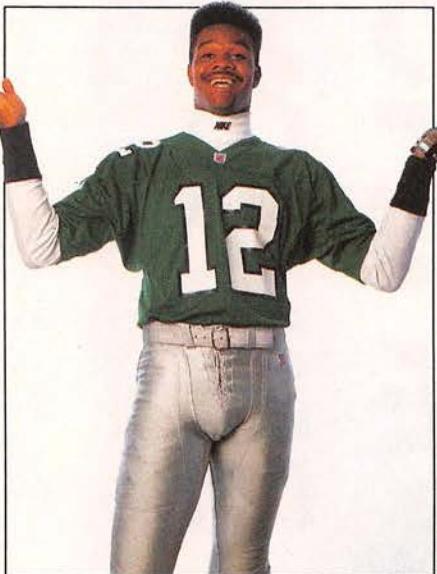
"We've taken the long road to make it. Our relationship has been great because we've each gone through the same thing."

Cunningham also says that the "black quarterback" issue is all but dead. "What I tried to accomplish was to go out, work hard, and do whatever it takes," he says. "I know that I'm black, and everybody

in America knows that I'm black. It doesn't matter what color you are. There aren't many Italian football players in the NFL. There aren't many players of the Jewish religion. It doesn't make a difference. Whatever you do, you have to push and work hard and dedicate yourself.

"You guys are picking us both to be in the Super Bowl. I've played against Houston, but Warren didn't play in one game and I didn't play in the Monday night game in Houston last year. Before Warren gets out of the league I'm going to play against him, and if we're both healthy it's going to be a great Super Bowl."

Seems like we've heard those words before.



"I'm black and everybody knows it. Color doesn't matter anymore."

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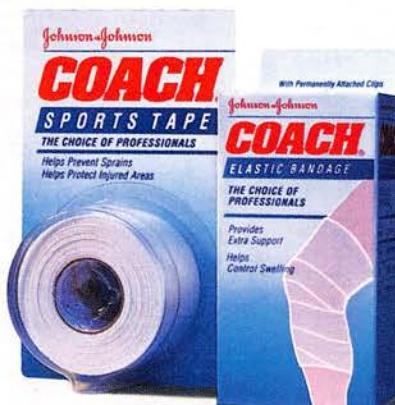
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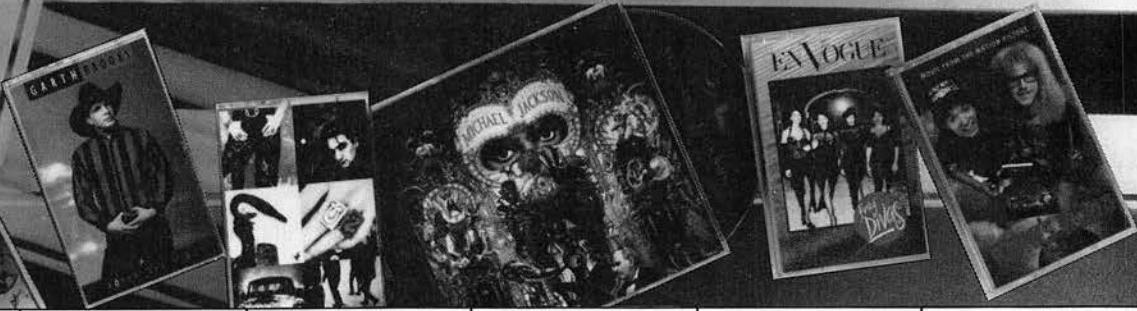
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■ Extra Bonus Offer: you may take one additional CD right now at the super-low price of only \$6.95—and you are then entitled to take an extra CD as a bonus FREE! And you'll receive your discounted CD and your bonus CD together with your 8 introductory selections—a total of 10 CDs in all!

HERE'S HOW TO GET YOUR 12 CASSETTES FOR 1¢...

■ Just write in the numbers of the 12 cassettes you want and mail the coupon, together with a check or money order for \$1.86 (that's 1¢ for your 12 cassettes, plus \$1.85 to cover shipping and handling).

■ You agree to buy just eight more selections in the next three years, at regular Club prices (currently \$7.98 to \$10.98, plus shipping and handling)—and you may cancel membership anytime after doing so.

■ Buy one—get one free Bonus Plan. If you continue membership after fulfilling your obligation, you'll be eligible for our generous bonus plan. It lets you get one cassette free for every one you buy at regular Club price (shipping and handling will be added). Otherwise, the Club operates in the same manner as described above.

■ 2 More Cassettes FREE. Choose your first selection now for only \$3.98 (that's up to 60% off regular Club prices)—and your membership obligation is immediately reduced: you then need buy only 7 more (instead of 8) in three years! AND this discount purchase also entitles you to 2 extra cassettes FREE. By taking advantage of this special offer, you can actually get 15 cassettes for less than the price of one!

■ If the Application is missing, write to: Columbia House, 1400 North Fruitridge Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana 47811-1130.



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One Person at a Time.™

Selections with two numbers count as two selections
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Send me these
8 CDs for 1¢

Do you have a VCR? (04) Yes No
 Do you have a credit card? (03) Yes No

Extra Bonus Offer: Also send me one more CD now, for which I've enclosed an additional \$6.95

...and I'm entitled to this extra CD FREE!

I PREFER CASSETTES—so enroll me in the Club under the terms outlined in this advertisement. I am enclosing check or money order for \$1.86 (that's 1¢ for my first 12 selections, plus \$1.85 shipping and handling). I agree to buy 8 selections, at regular Club prices, in the next 3 years—and may cancel membership anytime after doing so.

Do you have a telephone? (01) Yes No

Do you have a credit card? (03) Yes No

Also send my first selection for up to a 60% discount for which I am also enclosing additional payment of \$3.98. I then need buy only 7 more (instead of 8) at regular Club prices, in the next three years.

This purchase
entitles me to
2 cassettes FREE

My main musical interest is (check one):
(But I may always choose from any category)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Rock | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Rock | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Rock | <input type="checkbox"/> Light Sounds |
| Van Halen, | Michael Bolton, | The Cure, Red | Bette Midler, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ZZ Top | <input type="checkbox"/> Mariah Carey | Hot Chili Peppers | James Taylor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Metal | <input type="checkbox"/> R&B/Soul | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy Listening | <input type="checkbox"/> Dance/Pop |
| Skid Row, | Luther Vandross, | Frank Sinatra, | C&C Music Factory, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ozzy Osbourne | Boyz II Men | Ray Conniff | En Vogue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rap | <input type="checkbox"/> Country | <input type="checkbox"/> Jazz | <input type="checkbox"/> Classical |

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NUMBEROLOGY

The Cutting Edge of Baseball Research

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF them all over the country. They're normal people who look like us, talk like us, follow baseball like us—but they're not like us. Every day they are moving to change baseball—and, hence, your life—in some significant way, and you don't even know who they are.

They are members of SABR—the Society for American Baseball Research, to the uninitiated—and there are more than 6,000 of them. George Will is a member; Larry King used to be. Billy Crystal is ("but," says someone at the SABR offices, "under an assumed name").

Former attorney general Richard Thorndike is one; as he prepared to leave D.C., the story goes, one of the first things he did was to make

SABR puts out reams of information. There's a monthly bulletin and the annual "Baseball Research Journal," which details every aspect of baseball, from the history of ballpark sites to the slow demise of pitchers' hitting to the virtual extinction of left-handed

throwing shortstops. SABR people (called "sabermetricians") also change history in small ways. Bob Feller, for instance, called SABR and asked for help in finding his "missing strikeout." He was sure he had gotten one that wasn't included in the record books. Rapid Robert was right; in his first big league appearance, a relief stint, the official scorer had gone to the bathroom and missed a K. A check through box scores nearly half a century old yielded the historical nugget.

SABR changes history in big ways, too. John Holway, the author of "Voices From the Great Black Baseball Leagues," was, according to a source at the Baseball Hall of Fame, at one time "the only voice

supporting those old guys for admission to Cooperstown." A member of the Hall of Fame committee says that Holway "was on a mission." The mission was successful—the doors of Cooperstown finally opened to Negro Leaguers.

You might say that the entire Cleveland-based organization is on a mission. "SABR's intent," says executive director Morris Eckhouse, "is to present a clearer picture of what's happening in baseball, and to do what we have to in order to establish a clearer picture of what's already happened." And indeed, SABR-affiliated writers, either through the organization's publications or through their own books, have reshaped the way we



sure that his SABR bulletin would be mailed to his Pennsylvania address. David Letterman won't get his journal at any address; the jerk let his subscription lapse.

GAMES

To the Losers Go the Spoils

BARBARA JACKET HAS worked in the athletic department at Prairie View A&M for 27 years.

As former coach of the women's track team, Jacket led the Panthers to four NAIA indoor titles and nine NAIA outdoor championships in a row. In fact, Jacket is such a respected track mentor she coached the U.S. women at the Olympics in Barcelona.

However, none of these impressive accomplishments has brought Jacket anywhere near the attention that came her way when Prairie View A&M drew a blank last season and set an NCAA men's basketball record for most losses in a season. Not only that, but the women's basketball team also lost all its games, as did the school's Division I-A football team.

Jacket, now the school's athletic director, suddenly found her program the brunt of jokes from coast to coast. The jokes ranked

Prairie View A&M University, Won-Lost Records since 1986

Year	Record	Pct.
1986.....	3-8	.273
1987.....	3-7-1	.214
1988.....	5-5	.500
1989.....	1-9	.100
1990*		
1991.....	0-11	.000

* did not have a team in 1990

Men's Basketball

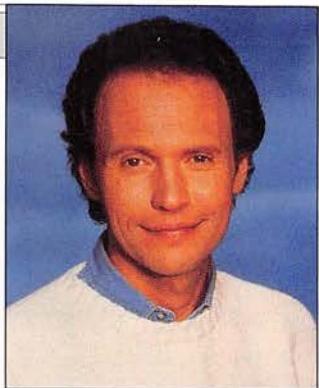
Year	Record	Pct.
1986-87....	6-22	.214
1987-88....	5-22	.185
1988-89....	11-16	.407
1989-90....	9-18	.333
1990-91....	5-22	.185
1991-92....	0-28	.000

Women's Basketball

Year	Record	Pct.
1986-87....	11-16	.407
1987-88....	8-20	.286
1988-89....	9-19	.321
1989-90....	8-18	.308
1990-91....	5-21	.192
1991-92....	0-26	.000

Neither Beard nor Jacket believe that losing big last season was all bad. "In losing," says

Jacket, "if you can develop character and self-discipline, I don't think all is lost." —Linda Kay



Crystal's a big diamond man.

approach and look at the game. Bill James and his "Baseball Abstract" and "Historical Baseball Abstract"; Pete Palmer and John Thorn and their "The Hidden Game of Baseball"; Graig Wright with "The Diamond Appraised"; and John Dewan and his STATS, Inc., with their yearly "Scouting Report"—all these books that dissect baseball statistics and trends would have been unthinkable 20 years ago.

"The task of writing baseball history in this generation has fallen on SABR and writers who have been influenced by SABR," says longtime member W. Lloyd Johnson. "SABR doesn't so much influence the establishment as it has become an establishment—or at least it



Will: Politics isn't his only passion.

counters the established baseball power base." SABR both aids and irks the stuffy brokers who run baseball. On one hand the sport has virtually nowhere else to go when it needs obscure statistical and historical information. (Oddly enough, major league baseball does not have and never has had an official record book.) On the other hand, SABR people are very much in demand with players and their agents for salary arbitration, which the owners (and, hence, the commissioner) regard as the bane of their existence.

It's not just the baseball establishment that SABR and its writers rub the wrong way. The old-line beat writers generally are hostile

toward the new generation of researchers and analysts. "They're ruining everything real fans like about the game," says a baseball beat writer for one of the New York dailies. "They nit-pick, rewrite history to suit their own views, and in general seem bent on burying baseball under a mountain of unintelligible and largely irrelevant statistics."

Johnson has an explanation for the hostility the "eggheaded pencil-pushers" and "stat crunchers" of SABR seem to inspire in the old-line beat writers. "We're taking something away from them," he says.

"Up until the 1960s they had the last word on baseball matters. They had access to the players and to some extent the front office, and what they wrote became history. Not only are they losing that, but

they're losing the past when we go back and find angles they missed."

In any event, hostility toward the not-for-profit organization is a losing proposition. The veteran reporters must feel as if they're living in a baseball equivalent of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"—every time they turn around, it seems that another sabermetrician has joined the establishment. Craig Barbarino, researcher for the commissioner's office, is a member; so is Dave Dombrowski, the general manager for the expansion Florida Marlins; so are an increasing number of beat writers. In fact, teams increasingly are starting to rely on the wisdom of SABR members such as Craig Wright, the much-applauded sabermetrician for the Texas Rangers who now is a consultant to the Los Angeles Dodgers.—Allen Barra



SPORTSFOCUS/IMAGING

Hockey isn't fun for Hull.

IT MAY BE A well-kept secret, but the Hull dynasty extends beyond hockey. Bart Hull—son of Bobby and the younger brother of Brett—has been attempting to forge his own athletic path as a running back in the Canadian Football League. His second season with the Ottawa Roughriders got under way in July.

Bart, 23, is the youngest of four Hull brothers and the only one who didn't pursue a hockey career. He exchanged skates for cleats in the eighth grade and immediately felt at home. "I just wasn't having much fun playing hockey," he says. "Looking back, I think there was pressure on me. I said at the time that there wasn't, but some people and coaches judged you twice as much because your name was Hull."

And what a name it was. In both Chicago and Winnipeg, the name Hull was magic. "When I think of it," says Bart, "my brothers and I were so lucky. We had the run of Chicago Stadium and Winnipeg

MY LIFE

A Hull of a Family

Stadium. We had advantages that kids dream about, and we took them all for granted."

Despite the advantages, however, the Hull family did not have a golden life off the ice. Bart was about 10 when his parents split. "It was a pretty messy divorce," he says. Two summers ago, though, the family united for the first time in 12 years when oldest brother Bob Jr. got married in Winnipeg. "I took the opportunity to try and get a little closer to my father," says Bart. "I was Daddy's boy when I was young. I'd go to every practice with him if I could. After the wedding I visited him at his home in Belleville, Ontario. It was great. We went fishing, we looked at the cattle he breeds. We really got to talk and know each other well."

His father then came to Boise State to watch Bart play one of his last games as a collegian. "Was I nervous?" Bart says, laughing. "Oh, my god. That was the first time he'd ever seen me play."

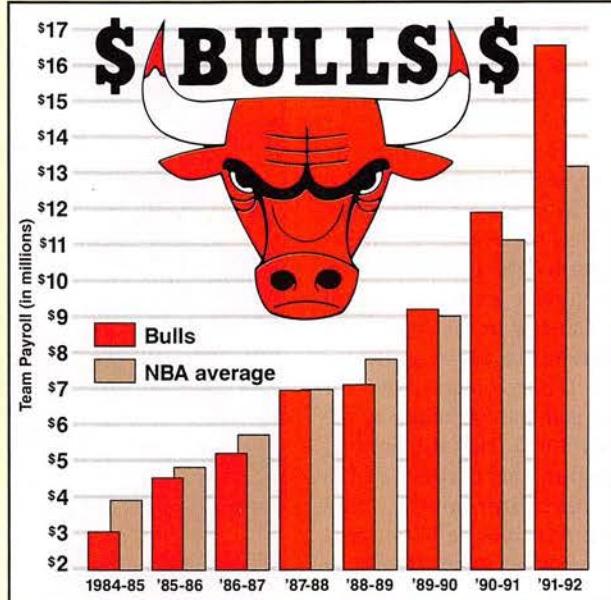
Last season, when Bart blew out his knee as a CFL rookie, his father was on the phone bolstering his spirits. "He treats me like a man, he gives me fatherly advice, and he's also a great guy and a great friend." —L.K.

BUSINESS

First Shots in the Battle of the Budget

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BATTLE IN THE NBA IN THE UP-coming months won't be Jordan vs. Drexler, the Bulls vs. the Knicks, or Barkley vs. anyone—gasp!—but the tug of war that is sure to be waged over the future of the much-debated and rarely understood salary cap. The basic agreement between the players union and management is scheduled to expire following the 1993-94 campaign, and the battle lines already have been drawn.

The players argue that the salary cap (or "revenue participation,"



as Chicago Bulls board chairman Jerry Reinsdorf prefers to call it) restricts their movement in the trade and free-agent markets. What's more, they point out that the bottom line has been juggled on occasion, a charge that was upheld in a lawsuit against club owners. The owners counter that not only has the entire league prospered as a result of the partnership in which players reap 53% of gross revenues, but that the competitive balance between the smaller and bigger markets has been maintained. "It would be foolish for the players association to make a big fuss over it," Reinsdorf says. "Revenue participation has had a lot to do with the stabilization of the league, and it certainly hasn't hurt the players any."

The Bulls represent the two extremes of the nine-year-old salary cap. In the midst of a national economic recession the Bulls franchise netted more than \$10 million last season, according to one NBA insider. As a result of such league-wide prosperity, the salary cap will increase 12% to \$14 million per team for the 1992-93 season.

Yet others contend that because of salary cap limitations the megatalentals who are largely responsible for the league's popularity cannot realize their true value. For instance, Michael Jordan ranked sixth in the salary standings at a comparatively modest \$3.25 million last season. Says Lakers GM Jerry West: "If we [got] the money to the players who most deserve it, then allowed the others to make what an All-Star earns through their play and not their collegiate reputations, it would be a better system."

"There are ways to circumvent the rules for those players, such as through contract extensions," Reinsdorf replies. "Besides, the league isn't only about superstars. If something is good for 95% of us, then it should be good enough for all of us." —Paul Ladewski

By BOB RUBIN

Rolling the Dice On a New Life

CHET FORTE IS A RECOVERING compulsive gambler who paid a terrible price for his addiction.

He lost everything he owned, including a \$1.5 million home in upscale Saddle River, N.J. He's more than a million dollars in debt. He suffered terrible public embarrassment and damage to his reputation by having to plead guilty to three felony counts (two for fraud and one for failure to file a tax return). He's still fighting to regain the respect of his wife, daughter, mother, and other relatives, all innocent victims of his habit. He's been shunned by former colleagues he thought were his friends back when he was accumulating 11 Emmys as a tough, arrogant, abrasive, and at times abusive producer-director during the glory days of ABC Sports under Roone Arledge.

Yet for all this, Forte considers himself extremely lucky and says that he has never been happier. Now a hit as co-host of a popular radio sports talk show on XTRA (690 AM) in San Diego, the 56-year-old Forte has found a new home, a new career, a new lifestyle, a new perspective, new values, and new—and true—friends. He hasn't gambled for more than four years now and says he hasn't the slightest urge to, but he still regularly attends meetings of Gamblers Anonymous, and he preaches against the evils of compulsive gambling any time and anywhere he can.

"I never knew when I became a compulsive gambler," Forte says. "I think I was insane—that's how bad it is. That's why I get up on a bandstand now. People don't like to hear statistics, but the



A bet on a baseball game hooked Forte: "That's how it all got started. As I progressed in my career and made more money, the bets got bigger."

bigger problem in America today is compulsive gambling. It almost ruined my life, which is why I think I'm always going to be on that bandstand."

Forte paid a steep price for a spot on that bandstand. "Toward the end, it was dreadful," he says. "If there were 40 college basketball games on Saturday night, I'd bet 40. If there were 100 games on Sunday, I'd bet 100. My wife would say to me, 'What are you, crazy?' and I'd say, 'I probably am.' She'd ask, 'Why do you do it?' and I'd say, 'It's the action, it's exciting.' She'd say, 'My god, you're in the most exciting business in the world. What more do you want?'

"I had no answer, but I just couldn't get out of it. I'm not a moron—I have a degree from Columbia [University]—but I had to take my family down to nothing

before I woke up. The disease takes over. It's insanity."

And it makes you do insane things. Forte lost \$208,000 in one final attempt to get out from under in Atlantic City—and he broke the law. Desperate to cover his losses, he gambled away money that wasn't his.

In March, some 18 months after pleading guilty to those three counts, Forte flew from San Diego to New Jersey for sentencing. He recalls standing in front of a judge in Camden—on Friday the 13th, no less—facing a maximum of 11 years in prison. By his side

were two men he calls his "angels": his lawyer, a public defender named Larry Lustberg, and Arnie Wexler, a GA official in New Jersey who got him into the program.

"I was very, very nervous, about to bust out crying, yet I wasn't afraid," Forte recalls. "No one wants to go to jail, but I could have accepted whatever happened. I loved the new Chet Forte. I knew I had learned from my mistakes. I knew I treated people differently. I knew I had changed."

"Looking back, I don't like the Chet Forte who worked in TV. I loved what he accomplished, but not the man. But I love the Chet Forte I've become. I love to be liked. I love my family. I love my friends. I love my job. As I stood there I knew I was a much better person than I had been, and was just hoping the judge could see it, too."

The judge could. He sentenced Forte to five years of supervised probation and 400 hours of community service in the

TRUE BLUE

San Diego area. "But it took about a month for it to really sink in," Forte says. "I remember waking up a week later, turning to my wife, and saying, 'My god, the sentencing . . .' "

"She said, 'It's over, Chet. It's over.'"

But what a wild ride it was. There's a book and a TV movie on Forte's life in the works, and it would be hard to make up a more dramatic story.

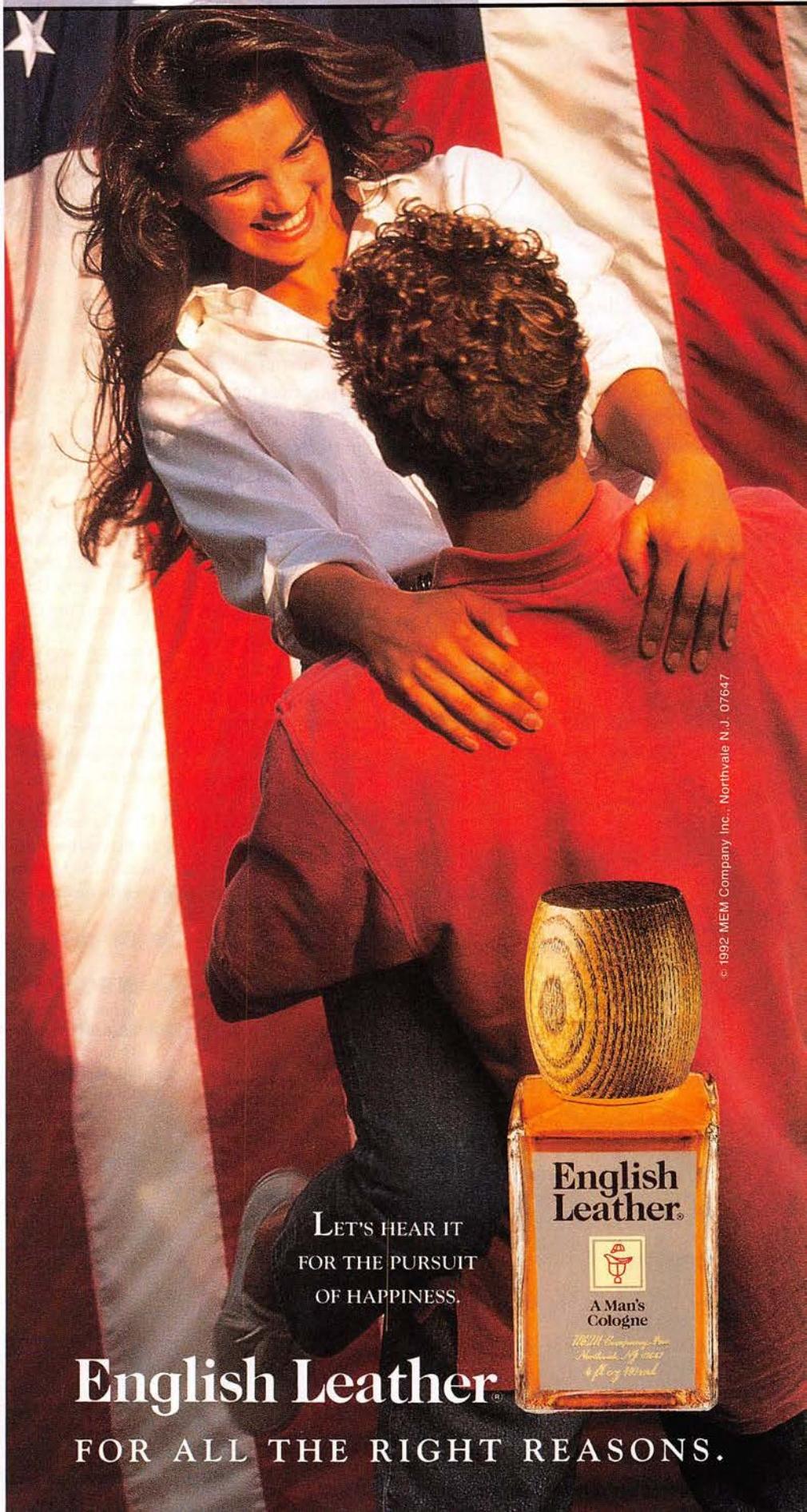
Forte first came to prominence as a basketball player at Columbia. A feisty 5'9" guard with a two-hand set shot (older fans will remember that), he finished third in the nation in scoring with a 28.9-point average his senior season, 1956-57. Forte was too small for the NBA, though, so he was sitting around at home one day trying to figure out what to do with his life when the first of the "angels" he says have helped him when he needed it appeared. His name was Dick Stanley, he worked for CBS, and he asked Forte to work there, too.

"I said I didn't know anything about television," Forte recalls. "He said, 'Chet, 80% is knowledge of sports. The other 20% you'll pick up.' The next week, I took a job at CBS for \$35 a week."

He made his first bet two years later, in 1960. A friend called him at home and suggested they bet three baseball games that night, \$20 on each. Forte wasn't interested, but the friend persisted and finally he went along. "Naturally, we lost all three," he says. "He called me the next day and I told him I'd give him \$60 at the end of the week. He said, 'Wait a minute. With the vigorish . . .' That's the first time I found out about vigorish."

The next day, Forte bet again. Then he went to the race track for the first time. "That's how it all got started," he says. "As I progressed in my career and made more money, the only thing that changed was the bets increased."

His career took a quantum leap in 1963 with the arrival of another angel, Roone Arledge, who was in the process of turning ABC into the premier sports network. Arledge asked young Forte to come along for the ride. "Under Roone, we had sports wrapped up for close to 20 years," Forte says. "We had the best of everything. We were in another class." And the Roonies went first-class: limos, suites, beautiful women, the best restaurants. Money was no object. "Whatever Arledge wanted, Arledge got."



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Upcoming Hot Dates That You Won't Want To Miss

Pigskin Classic

The '92 college football season starts with a bang as Stanford and Texas A&M tangle. For the Cardinal, this game marks the start of the Bill Walsh Era, Part II. Texas A&M, meanwhile, will be no pushover. The odds-on favorites for the Southwest Conference title, the Aggies will be formidable despite losing their top three players: quarterback Bucky Richardson, linebacker Quentin Coryatt, and cornerback Kevin Smith.

Kickoff Classic

The ACC meets the Big Ten as North Carolina State and Iowa lock horns. A win here would be a major feather in the cap of N.C. State coach Dick Sheridan, who led the Wolfpack to a school-record nine wins last year. This season Iowa wide-out Danan Hughes might steal the spotlight, provided the Hawkeyes can find a replacement for departed quarterback Matt Rodgers.

NHL Training Camps Open

Here are three NHL players who should be especially grateful for a clean slate this year—they really have something to prove.

THEO FLEURY. Flash back to the 1990-91 season, when Fleury posted 104 points and sparked the Calgary Flames to a second-place finish in the Smythe Division. Then came last year's debacle, when Fleury slipped to 73 points and the Flames didn't even qualify for postseason play.

MARK MESSIER. Despite MVP credentials that

included 107 points, Messier couldn't help the New York Rangers beat the ghost of playoff futility past. Messier was troubled by back problems in the postseason as the Rangers failed again in their quest for their first Stanley Cup since 1940.

PATRICK ROY. He posted some shiny statistics in the regular season: a 36-22-8 record, five shutouts, and an NHL-best 2.36 goals-against average. However, the Bruins took the luster off Roy and his Montreal Canadiens teammates by sweeping them in the Adams Division finals.

AUG/SEPT

Hot Spots

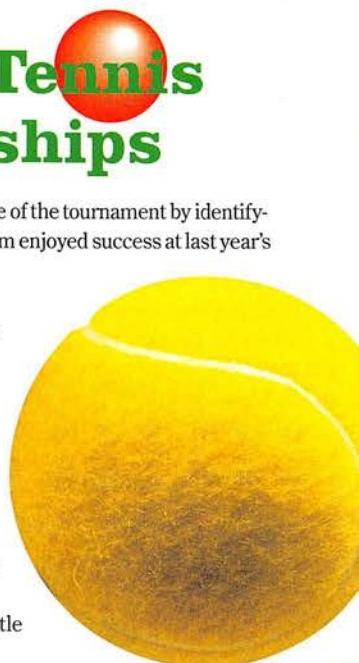
U.S. Open Tennis Championships

WHO AM I? Test your knowledge of the tournament by identifying these three tennis players, all of whom enjoyed success at last year's tournament (answers bottom of page):

I HAD AN identical U.S. Open Deco Turf II court built in the backyard of my Greenwich, Conn., mansion to help me prepare for the U.S. Open. It sure paid off—I won three titles in the 1980s.

THREE MONTHS SHY OF MY 18th birthday, I became the second youngest U.S. Open champion in history when I defeated Martina Navratilova to win the women's singles title last year.

IN '91, I steamrolled into the men's singles final without losing a set. I beat crowd favorite Jimmy Connors in the semis before dropping the title match to Stefan Edberg, whom I had beaten in the quarterfinals at the French Open earlier in the year.



NEC World Series of Golf

In last year's tournament Tom Purtzer almost let first place and the \$216,000 purse slip through his fingers, as Davis Love III and Jim Gallagher Jr. both made back-nine rallies to force a three-way playoff. However, Purtzer regrouped and two-putted the second hole of the sudden-death playoff to salt away the victory. Purtzer's final score of 279 was the highest winning total in the 30-year history of the tournament. It also marked the fifth time the tournament was won in a playoff. Here's a recap of the other four:

Year	Winner (Score)	Runner-up	Playoff Holes
1978.....	Gil Morgan (278)	Hubert Green	1
1982.....	Craig Stadler (278)	Raymond Floyd	4
1988.....	Mike Reid (275)	Tom Watson	1
1989.....	David Frost (276)	Ben Crenshaw	2

QUIZ ANSWERS: Baseball Hall of Fame: Tom Seaver—San Diego Padres; Bill McGowran—Cleveland Indians and Boston Red Sox; Rollie Fingers—San Diego Padres; Hal Newhouser—Chicago Cubs; U.S. Open: Ivan Lendl; Monica Seles; Jim Courier
Seaver—San Diego Padres; Bill McGowran—Cleveland Indians and Boston Red Sox; Rollie Fingers—San Diego Padres; Hal Newhouser—Chicago Cubs; U.S. Open: Ivan Lendl; Monica Seles; Jim Courier

Major League Baseball Hall of Fame Inductions

Four more names join the ranks in Cooperstown, N.Y. Test your knowledge of the Hall of Fame's Class of '92 (answers opp. page):

Tom Seaver

In 1970 Seaver set a major league record by striking out 10 consecutive hitters. Against which National League team did Seaver set this record?



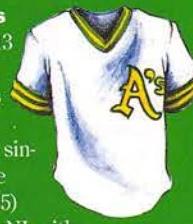
Bill McGowan

An American League umpire for 30 years, McGowan called balls and strikes in the AL's first pennant playoff (1948) between which two teams?



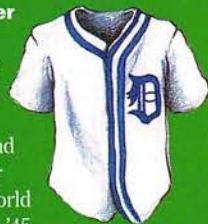
Rollie Fingers

Fingers spent 13 of his 17 major league seasons in the AL, but his two highest single-season save totals (37 and 35) occurred in the NL with which team?



Hal Newhouser

Besides being the only pitcher to win successive MVP awards (1944 and '45), Newhouser also won two World Series games in '45 against which team?



NFL Preseason Games Begin

Here are the NFL teams with the best preseason winning percentages over the last five years; included in parentheses is each team's regular-season record over the same period and where that record ranks among NFL teams:



August & September Events

August

1	Pro Football Hall of Fame Game (New York Jets vs. Philadelphia Eagles)	Canton, Ohio
1	Pro Football Hall of Fame inductions	Canton, Ohio
2	Baseball Hall of Fame inductions	Cooperstown, N.Y.
7	NFL preseason games begin	
13-16	Men's golf: PGA Championship	St. Louis
17-23	Men's tennis: U.S. Hardcourt Championships	Indianapolis
26	College football: Pigskin Classic (Stanford vs. Texas A&M)	Anaheim, Calif.
27-30	Men's golf: NEC World Series of Golf	Akron
29	College football: Kickoff Classic (Iowa vs. N.C. State)	East Rutherford, N.J.
31-	Men's & women's tennis: U.S. Open	New York
Sept. 13		

September

1	Baseball: Active rosters increase to 40 players	
6-7	NFL regular season begins	
10-13	Golf: PGA (Tour) Canadian Open	Oakville, Ontario
12	Women's tennis: U.S. Open Championship	New York
13	Men's tennis: U.S. Open Championship	New York
14	NHL training camps open (date tentative)	
25-27	Men's tennis: Davis Cup	Minneapolis
28	Baseball: Final week of regular season begins	

NFL Season Begins

Pro football fans won't have to wait very long to see some heated matchups in the NFL this year. The September schedule alone offers several very intriguing games. Here's the game of the week for each of the first four weeks of the '92 season:

WEEK 1: WASHINGTON AT DALLAS

The NFL champion Redskins begin their title defense in difficult fashion, with a Monday-night road game against a fierce division rival. Washington is winless in five previous season-opening meetings with the Cowboys.

WEEK 2: BUFFALO AT SAN FRANCISCO

This looms as a critical year for both teams. The Bills are hoping to make a run at a third straight—and hopefully victorious—Super Bowl. The 49ers are hoping to rebound from last year's post-season absence and make yet another playoff run.

WEEK 3: N.Y. GIANTS AT CHICAGO

You always can count on a memorable game when these two teams hook up. The Bears won last year's matchup at Soldier Field 20-17 when William Perry—yes, William Perry—blocked a Giants field goal attempt with 10 seconds left.

WEEK 4: L.A. RAIDERS AT KANSAS CITY

Not only a matchup of AFC West rivals, this also is a rematch of last year's AFC wild-card game, won 10-6 by the Chiefs—their first playoff victory in 21 years.



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Forte became one of Roone's stars. He directed "Monday Night Football" for 17 years. He directed a Super Bowl and probably more Olympic coverage than any man in history. He worked the Kentucky Derby, the Indianapolis 500, "Wide World of Sports," the NBA, college football and basketball. Arledge loaned him to news, where he covered both national political conventions and numerous space shots. "You name it, I did it," Forte says.

And as the song says, Forte did it his way. He was extremely tough on himself and everyone who worked for him. "I only knew how to direct one way, and that was basically by intimidation," he says.

The gambling continued and, inevitably, got worse. Forte says everyone at ABC knew about it, but nobody said anything to him. Nobody cautioned him, warned him, alerted him, tried to stop him.

"Roone Arledge made me everything I was in television," Forte says. "Roone Arledge also knew I gambled every single solitary day. I wonder what would have happened if Roone had called me into his office one day and said, 'Chet, if you don't stop gambling I'm taking you off "Monday Night Football."'" Maybe he didn't feel that was his responsibility. I'll never know because it never happened.

"I haven't talked to Roone before or since the indictment."

The glory years at ABC Sports ended in 1986, when the network was acquired by tight-fisted Capital Cities, which cut back drastically on the rights fees—and the executive salaries—it was willing to pay. Forte was earning a salary of more than \$500,000 a year, which the new management made clear to him it considered far too much. Arledge gave up sports to head news, so Forte lost his patron. Many of the other veterans of the good times had left, too. Unhappy in the work environment and, as usual, in need of cash, Forte bought out his contract at the end of '86.

Two months later, he had a heart attack. He was in surgery for four hours and couldn't work for six months. He tried a career as an independent producer, doing arena football and a trash sport called "Roller Games." The assignments were fewer, which left him at home to watch TV—and, of course, bet.

In 1989 a first cousin and her husband, godparents of Forte's daughter, sued him in civil court for failure to pay a \$280,000 note they had cosigned. In April 1990 he reached rock-bottom. He lost his house

and was indicted on nine counts in a federal court in Newark, N.J.

Forte had quit gambling two years before the indictment, but at Wexler's urging he joined GA. Forte says it has been a godsend in helping him come to grips with the still-raw pain of damaged or destroyed relationships. "I had so many questions," he says. "What happened to all of my friends in TV? None of

had in his life. All the others he bought. I loved the guy, and still do.

"When I called after the indictment, I said, 'Howard, I really feel bad about what happened to me. I've wanted to call you and say hello, but I didn't have the guts because I was ashamed.' Do you know what he said? 'Well, what do you want from me?'

"What do you want from me?" My god, doesn't that sum up my industry? I said, 'Howard, I don't want anything from you. I just thought we were friends.' Afterward I wrote him a letter. I said, 'Howard, no matter what, I'll never forget you or the great moments we had together. Sincerely, Chet.'

After the indictment Forte had no prospects of getting TV work—but along came still another angel to point him in a new direction. A radio talk show consultant named Bruce Marr heard Forte being interviewed by a station on the West Coast and liked what he heard. He called Forte and told him he thought he'd be a good host.

As he had more than 30 years earlier when Stanley made his pitch, Forte at first resisted on the basis of inexperience, but Marr talked him into making a two-hour tape. "The next day, he calls and says he can place me tomorrow in San Diego," Forte says. "If you don't call that an angel . . ."

Forte could declare bankruptcy but has chosen instead to attempt to pay back all of the million-plus he owes. "I have deals with banks, payment systems arranged. I don't know if I'll be able to pay it all back in my lifetime, but I'm going to try. It's my responsibility."

Forte remains interested in TV work down the road—"I don't think I've forgotten how to direct"—but he does not ever intend to resume the kind of schedule he once had. "I had great times at ABC and I love all those people, no matter what they think of me," Forte says. "They are not going to strip me of my memories, but I don't need what I had to live a happy life. I love this job and I wouldn't give it up for the world. I'm not going to do anything in TV that's going to take me away from it, my family, or my new friends . . . my real friends. I've made enough mistakes for one lifetime, and maybe there aren't any more angels left out there for me. I don't want to push my luck." ■

Senior writer BOB RUBIN has a great deal of respect for Forte's accomplishments, both professionally and personally. Bob's betting on Chet to make it.

I never knew when I became a compulsive gambler. I think I was insane—that's how bad it was. It almost ruined my life."

them called me. No one. No one! Didn't I win all those Emmys? Wasn't I one of Roone's best friends? Didn't I break my tail? I wasn't the only one who gambled. I wasn't the only one who made mistakes. My god, I wasn't a serial killer. But they treated me like I had leprosy.

"I couldn't understand it until I got into GA. They told me, 'Chet, forget it. You're not part of that life anymore. Live one day at a time.' GA helped me deal with other questions, too. How do you treat your friends? How do you gain back the respect of your wife? What about your daughter, who used to have everything and now has nothing? You took it all away from her, and she's old enough to understand that.

"What about your mother, who's 78? What about the others in your family who tried to help but were let down by you? GA taught me to at least approach these problems. If not for GA, I don't know where I'd be today."

However, Forte acknowledges that the process of healing isn't complete by any means. "I still have a little voice in me that says, 'My god, are you going to tell me all those years, everything we accomplished together—whether it be McKay, Gifford, Cosell or whomever—that it meant nothing to these people? That we were just forced together at Innsbruck, Grenoble, Munich, and all those other places? That after working, traveling, and living together all those years, they weren't my friends?'

A snub from Howard Cosell, who was the best man at Forte's wedding, hurt most of all. "I did 90% of Howard's shows at ABC," Forte says. "I did his first and last shows. I was always there for him, always sticking up for him. I've always contended I was the only friend Howard



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INSIDE OUT

Please explain what happens in this baseball scenario: There are runners on first and third, one out. The runners break with a line drive to right field. The right fielder makes a shoestring grab for one out and throws to the first baseman to double up the runner. My question is: Does the runner who crossed home plate count as a run?

M.D., San Antonio

Under the four-out rule in baseball, the run counts if the runner on third crosses the plate (regardless of whether he tagged up legally or not) unless the first baseman throws to third base and also doubles up that runner.

Please give me the Opening Day record of the Houston Astros and how many times they have posted shutouts in those games.

P.P. Midland, Texas

The Astros have gone 15-16 on Opening Day with no shutout victories.

When the Chicago Blackhawks played the Edmonton Oilers in the Campbell Conference finals, much was said about the difference in size of the ice rinks used by these two teams. I had thought that all NHL rinks were the same size. What is the regulation size of an NHL ice rink, and which teams' rinks fall short of that regulation size?

K.Y., Minneapolis

Excluding the two new expansion franchises, 18 of the 22 NHL teams have regulation-size rinks, which are 200' x 85'. The teams that have smaller rinks are the Boston Bruins (191' x 83'), Buffalo Sabres (193' x 84'), Chicago Blackhawks (185' x 85'), and San Jose Sharks (185' x 85').

The California Angels' unfortunate bus accident in May made me wonder what Major League Baseball's policy is when disaster strikes and a team can no longer field the mandatory nine players. Also, do the other professional sports leagues have any type of contingency plan?

R.B., Columbus, Ohio

The policy is different in baseball's two

major leagues. If disaster strikes a National League team, the affected club can choose from a pool of players contributed to by the other teams. The players in the pool must agree to be in the pool and have assignable contracts. In the AL, if a team loses six or more players it can draft the total number lost minus five. The other teams each must contribute four players—a pitcher, catcher, infielder, and outfielder—but no team can lose more than two players. Players with 10 years in the league and five years with one

Also, did the Bulls receive an extra bonus for finishing the season with the NBA's best record?

K.M., Glenview, Ill.

The world champion Bulls received a total of \$680,000, divided at the organization's discretion, for winning the NBA Finals, while the Portland Trail Blazers wound up with \$455,000 for finishing as the runner-up. The Bulls received an additional \$125,000 for owning the league's best record for the 1991-92 season with a 67-15 mark. Because of the NHL's new collective-bargaining agreement, the Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins received \$40,000 per player (based on 25 players) from a \$1 million pool. The Chicago Blackhawks players received \$33,000 apiece from an \$825,000 pool.

With baseball's new expansion teams, the Florida Marlins and Colorado Rockies, beginning play in 1993, I was wondering what the procedure is for these teams to draft players from existing major league rosters. Are any current major leaguers exempt from being drafted?

A.H., Spokane

team and players with no-cut contracts are exempt.

In the NFL, if a team loses 15 or more players the commissioner determines whether the team can finish its season. If its season is cancelled the affected team gets the first pick in the following draft and will be able to draft players from the other teams, which can protect up to 34 players apiece.

If an NBA team loses five or more players it drafts the number of players it has lost from the other teams, which can protect five players apiece.

NHL teams that have lost players may draft players only if they are unable to replenish themselves through trades and sales; other teams may protect one goalie and 10 skaters, and can lose no more than one player.

Since both the Chicago Bulls and Blackhawks advanced to their respective leagues' championship rounds, I was wondering which team would be awarded more playoff money for winning the championship, the Bulls or Blackhawks?

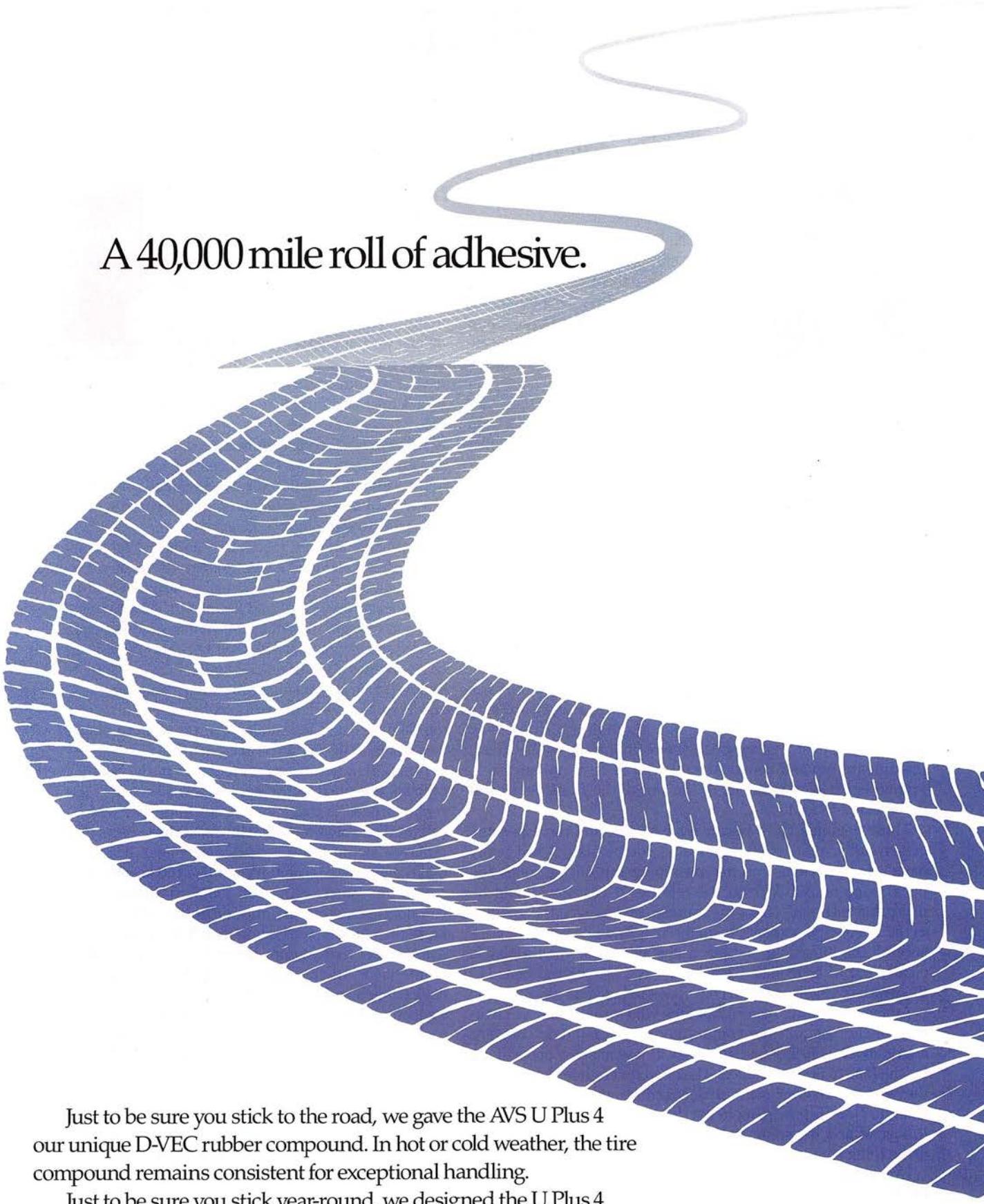
The 26 major league teams can protect 15 players from their 40-man rosters (players with no-trade clauses and "5-and-10" men must be among the 15 protected). After a coin flip to decide who selects first, Florida and Colorado will alternate picks, taking one player apiece from each team.

Before the second round begins, each NL team will be allowed to protect three more players (for a total of 18 per team), while the AL clubs can protect four more (19 per team). In the second round, the expansion teams each will select one more man from each of the 26 teams. In the third round they will pick one apiece from the 12 NL teams and eight of the 14 AL teams (to be determined later), which means a total of 72 players will be drafted, 36 by each expansion team. ■

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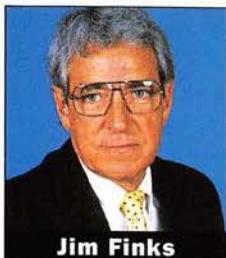
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Issue of the month: Was the NFL right to abolish instant replay?



Jim Finks

WHEN INSTANT REPLAY WAS first introduced in 1986, I had a lot of apprehensions about it but I voted for it. I was concerned about the intimidation of officials, which would make them reluctant to call the game, and I was concerned about the mechanics of it, but my skepticism ended after the first year.

Officials realize the game is becoming so fast and there are so many plays when the naked eye has to make a hell of a snap judgment that they will make some errors. Officials would like to have some mechanism in place to help them change a wrong call. The overwhelming majority of coaches also want instant replay. They want as fair a job of officiating as you can possibly get. Their livelihood depends on winning and losing, and they want to make sure they get the best shake from officiating that they possibly can.

The perceived problem with instant replay is that it delays the game unnecessarily. First of all, it doesn't ever delay a game unnecessarily when it can change an obvious mistake into a correct call. The average game might be delayed a total of three minutes, but that's a small price to pay for correct calls.

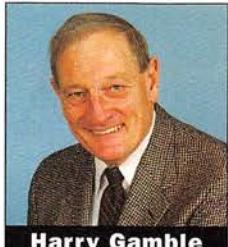
What has hurt instant replay more than anything are the commentators and broadcasters who, for whatever reason, are anti-instant replay. Every time there is a glitch or a mistake they magnify it tenfold. However, the interesting thing is that those [commentators and broadcasters] who have a football background—the John Maddens of the world, the Hank Strams of the world—are for it.

Those commentators' comments have affected the way some of our clubs voted. Now those same commentators will really have a field day—not on instant replay, but on Joe Jones the back judge or Bob Wilson the referee: "Geez, how could he make that mistake? That's the same guy who made the mistake in the Philadelphia game." Instant replay had taken a lot of pressure off the officiating and put it upstairs. Now when a play is clearly out of bounds and Joe Jones says, "He was in bounds," the wrath of God is going to come back to haunt an official.

An overwhelming majority of fans who write to me as chairman of the competition committee are devastated. They are angry about us losing instant replay. It was another opportunity for the fans to be entertained. They find it very interesting when they can get another point of view and something can be done about it. Now they're going to get the same replays at the games this year, and it's going to be frustrating when we can't do a damn thing about it.

Everybody recognizes the fact that instant replay has glitches. It will never be perfect because there is some judgment involved, but anytime you can make as sure as possible that a call is correct, the game is going to be better. ■

A longtime advocate of instant replay, Saints president/GM JIM FINKS advises the NFL on playing rules, officiating, and player personnel as the chairman of the competition committee.



Harry Gamble

TO SUM IT UP, I DIDN'T THINK instant replay worked. It was flawed, like anything else. For me, the delays that took place in the course of the game in many instances was bothersome. The delays were a bigger problem than the errors replay corrected! Football games have a rhythm to them, ebbs and flows of momentum, and the delays interrupted that. Sometimes it took the enthusiasm of the fans right out of the game.

I always felt the concept was good. In fact, I was for it initially, and continue to be for the concept of correcting a wrong—but, at the same time, what price do you pay to correct a wrong? This business of pace and momentum of the game is important, and I didn't like to see it interrupted.

There was another factor that bothered me immensely, and that is that if you took a CBS Sunday afternoon game and counted the cameras available for replay purposes, you'd find considerably fewer than you'd find for an ABC Monday night game. To me, that's important. All of the games were not equal. The play missed or the play not reviewed because you don't have enough cameras may determine the outcome of a game, which helps determine championships. If you have six cameras at one game and 12 at another, it doesn't make sense. That's not a level playing field. It's as if on Sunday games we were playing with one less official. This bothered me.

I think that human error continues in the booth. On-the-field officials are making the calls in split seconds, and one thing replay proved is that most of the time they make the correct call. At the same time, sometimes on these plays that have been replayed for up to two minutes or longer, it still is difficult to make the right decision. It's not like the answer is always clear-cut on the camera either. So you don't eliminate mistakes, and you do, it seems to me, intimidate the officials on the field. I know the officials won't admit that, but I think it has an effect.

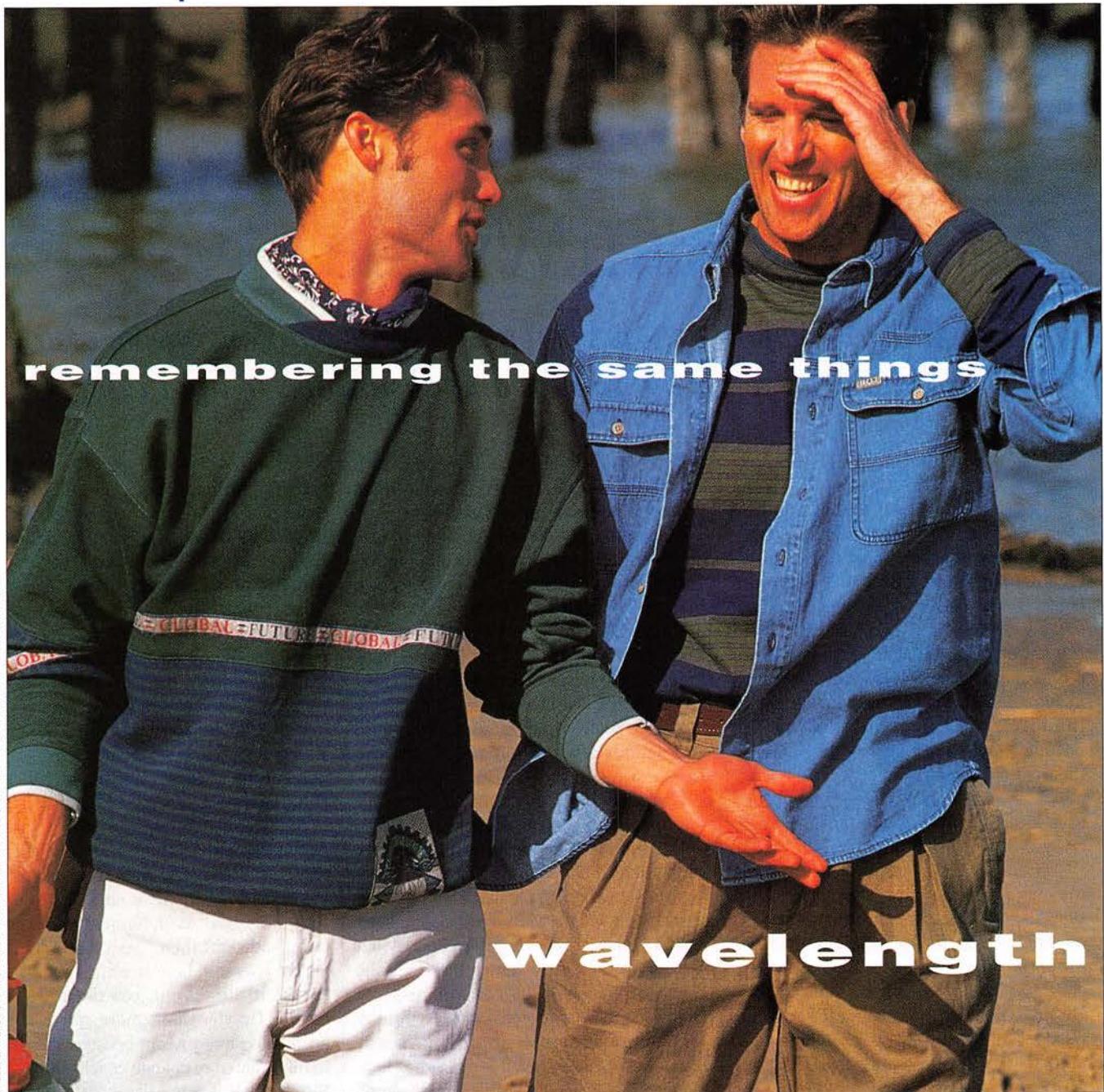
I still feel that you are never, ever going to take the human element out of the game. Even though you use electronic devices such as TV cameras, you still have a human being who's evaluating. Say you have a receiver who catches a long sideline pass, and from one angle the edge of his foot appears to touch the line and from another it doesn't. It's such a fine line! Again, if you don't have the right angle or enough cameras, you can't get that certainty you're after.

I still like the concept. If we could eliminate all the delays and handle all games and plays equally, then I like the idea of correcting mistakes. But all this dilly-dallying out on the field was just unacceptable to me. Last year they say the average delay was under two minutes, but that was just the average. Some of those delays were just interminable!

In this case, the cure was worse than the affliction. ■

Eagles president HARRY GAMBLE has done it all during his rise through the Philadelphia organization, beginning with his first job as a volunteer assistant coach.

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INSIDE INTERVIEW

By ED WERDER

Sam Wyche

Tampa Bay's new coach has a rep as a loose cannon, but he also displays a sharp eye for the ironies and absurdities of life in the NFL

HE'S BEEN HEAVILY FINED AND recently fired. Sam Wyche is the new coach of the Tampa Bay Bucs, a position that comes complete with apathy and empty trophy cases, records that impress dyslexics and press conferences that keep turning into competency hearings. From the quarterbacks to the ballboys, the Buccaneers have been remarkably predictable as the most inept, misdirected, and unsuccessful franchise in the history of abject failure. Now the uncontrollable and inconsistent coach in the front-office uneasy chair is Sam Wyche, a.k.a. "Wicky Wacky." "Let's face it," he says with arched eyebrows. "I'm about half-crazy."

Wyche has emerged unaltered by his messy divorce from the Cincinnati Bengals; he still prefers his mouth and his offense wide open. The exposure to unemployment and the possible end of his coaching career has not intimidated him. He continues to push for locker-room reform, and he still levels periodic insults at the perceived incompetents in the glass offices of the NFL for their failure or refusal to concede his point. He is still restless and relentless, independent and outspoken, seemingly head-down determined to become to NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue what Al Davis once was to Pete Rozelle: an unrelenting annoyance. "Getting fired didn't scare me," Wyche says.

Forever topical and atypical, Wyche changed teams and tax brackets after he refused Bengals general manager Mike Brown's commands to compromise his style and concentrate his brain matter solely on football. (At one point, Brown actually gave Wyche a handful of 3-by-5 index cards that contained the benign responses from other NFL coaches confronted with poten-

tially controversial topics.) When Brown was unable to change Wyche, he made another kind of coaching change.

Meanwhile, Wyche has remained all one-liners and no losses since accepting a five-year, \$3.9 million contract to replace the beleaguered Richard Williamson. During a live television program, Wyche took his first look at videotape of the interceptions, fumbles, and missed tackles that produced a 3-13 record last season. He immediately turned to team owner Hugh Culverhouse and remarked, "That wasn't in the brochure."

Wyche offers a rather simple promise for the upcoming season: He will produce a better won-lost record and more belly laughs than John McKay. The wise-cracking McKay, who lost his first 26 games but remains the team's winningest coach, averaged a victory cigar every third Sunday but choked on the putrid fumes the rest. The hiring of Wyche—who's as glib as Jerry Glanville, as image-conscious as Jimmy Johnson, and as calculating as Texas Instruments—has played well. He has kept the sleep patterns of a borderline insomniac and tirelessly maintained a high profile, using the sheer force of his personality to overcome the understandable impatience or utter indifference rampant in his new zip code. At one of his many open practices, he used a wireless microphone and the public-address system at Tampa Stadium to offer 5,000 spectators play-by-play analysis, then finished up with interviews afterward. Is this guy a game-day coach or a game-show host?

He's both. Wyche led the Bengals to intermittent success in his eight-year career. He compiled a 61-66 regular-season record, won two AFC Central titles, and reached the Super Bowl. Now, three cups of coffee and four glazed doughnuts into a

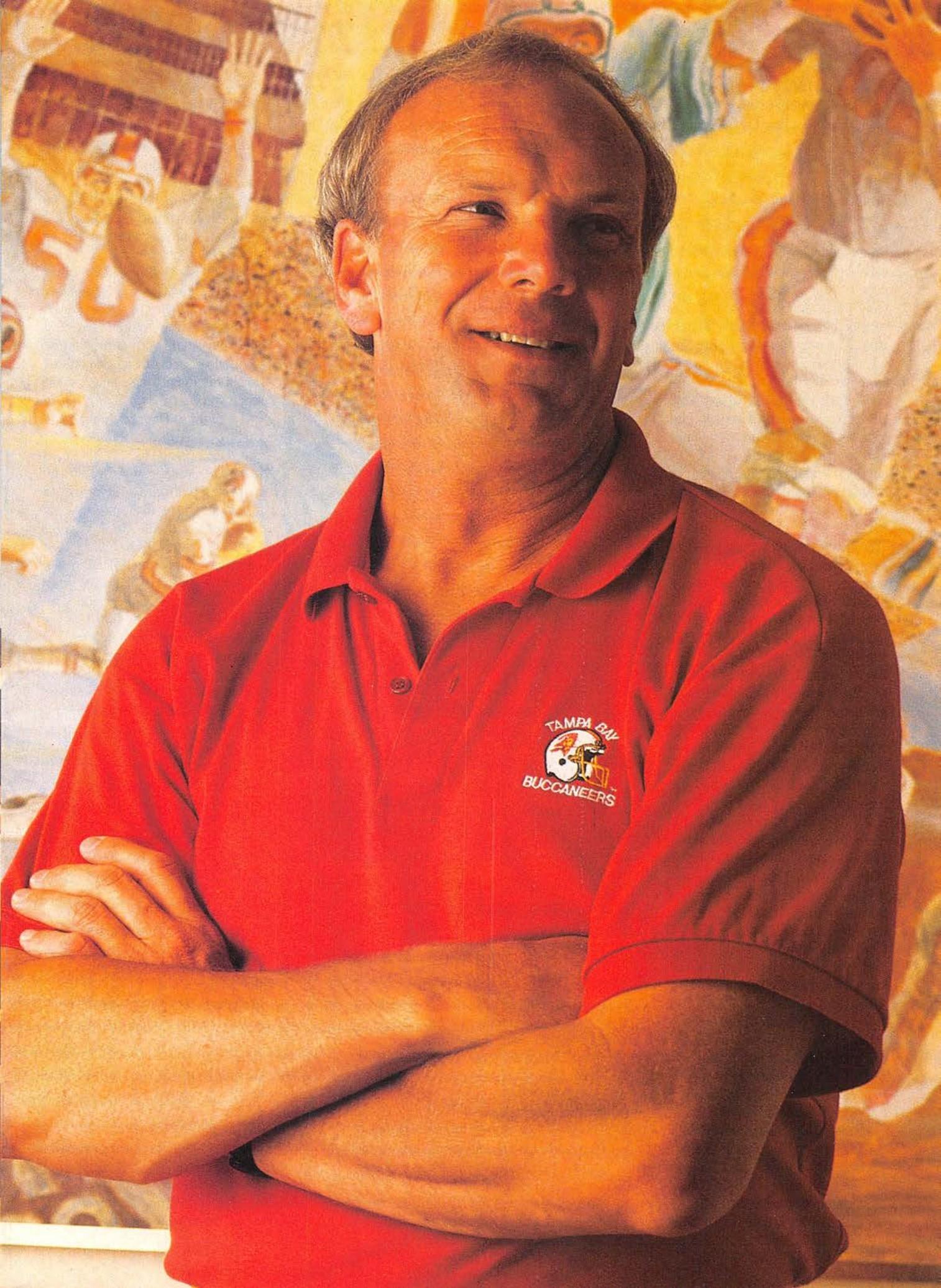
recent workday, Wyche sits at his desk and spends two hours discussing his favorite topic: himself.

INSIDE SPORTS: You either were fired or resigned from the Bengals after an intense and emotional postseason meeting with Mike Brown. What happened?

SAM WYCHE: We always had postseason meetings. When Paul Brown was alive, it was always the day after the season. Generally, those meetings were about vacation schedules, scouting schedules—who was going to scout which games—a critique of the season from P.B., a critique of the coaches from me. Those kinds of reviews. But, of course, Paul Brown was deceased, and so there was Mike Brown and Pete Brown and Katie Brown was taking notes from moment one. That was the first time that ever happened. I should have said right then, "Wait a second. Do I need a lawyer in here or something?"

IS: As it turned out, you did need legal advice. Do you think there was a hidden agenda to force you out because the Brown family wanted to change coaches?

SW: I think it was Mike's first time doing this and he wanted to be the strong arm first and then soften where he thought he could later on. But I don't think he ever went into the meeting saying, "I'm going to fire this guy." After a 3-13 year, here was Mike saying, "I'm setting the standard the way I want it, and if there's any resistance at all, that's it." We identified all the things we thought needed to be done. I told him the things I wanted done. We needed a stronger scouting department because we only had one guy. We needed a weight room—we had a weight room about twice the size of my office here. The players needed to spend the night in a hotel for security reasons to keep some of these guys who can't control themselves together.



er the night before the game. We needed to do things to help us win; they wanted me to do things like not say anything about the air pollution over Spinney Field, which is literally so bad I had to call some practices short.

The main thing I wanted, after we had that initial discussion about what needed to be done, was to take a break—we were too tired—but Mike wanted to do it then. I honestly believe that if we had gone to lunch none of that would have happened. But at that point I was informed I had just resigned, that I was in violation of the contract. The only thing I resisted was when he said he didn't want me to ever say anything about the officials, didn't want me to say anything to the media about social issues, and I had to control Boomer [Esiason]. Boomer couldn't say anything about the officials, social issues, or about the stench over Spinney Field.

IS: It seems like this was a power struggle: You were the veteran coach wanting to broaden your control, and Mike Brown was in charge of the team for the first time and wanted to consolidate power and bring you under his control. Is that accurate?

SW: I wanted to solve problems, and he wanted to work around problems. That was the difference. It never was an argument. It never was a power play. It was just—bam!—it was over like that. I was so stunned that when I stood up, the chair didn't move behind me, and I actually stumbled and felt like a goofball. I stood up. I shook Mike's hand. I shook Pete's hand. Then I went for Katie's hand and I missed her hand. Then, when I turned again, I stumbled because the chair still hadn't moved. I went to the door, and I was so shaken and stunned I missed the door-knob. It was a very, very disturbing time.

IS: How do you take it when Esiason and other players say the team will be more disciplined and focused in your absence?

SW: That's the natural thing. Here's the new coach [David Shula], and that's what I hope he would say to support his new coach. My personality and friendship with the players disguised the discipline. Then another guy comes in, and he has a square jaw and says things will be different. Well, different doesn't mean better.

IS: Do you ever create distractions to insu-

late the players during a poor performance or use them as a diversionary tactic to shift the focus of attention from a bad record?

SW: Sometimes. I think other coaches do that too. I've already got the target on my chest going in, so I want to turn a little bit to make the shot a little easier if it takes the pressure off a quarterback or a defense and helps them do their job better and helps us win. If we don't win the game [the media are] going to be shooting at me and them. I just let them shoot at me.

IS: Would you agree that some of these incidents have coincided with difficult peri-

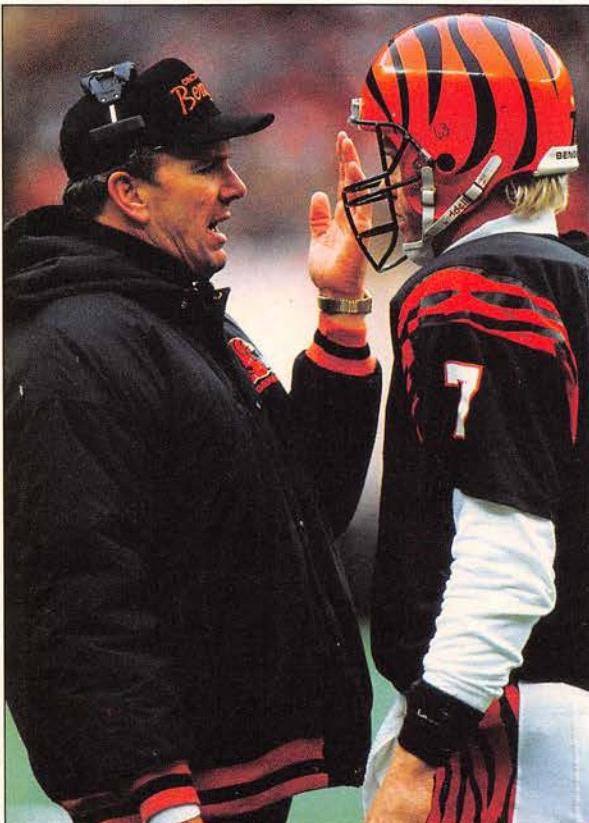
go along with him on that one. "I don't want to do anything about it, but don't let it happen again." I brought this up to the team, and the players' solution was to step outside. That takes no brains. Sometimes no-brains are the people who should be in charge instead of the people who have the brains and the politics and the egos. The answer is nobody belongs in the locker room. It would only take a pea-brain to figure out that you're walking into a bathroom. That's all a locker room is. I mean, they're taking a crap, they're taking a piss, they're bent over, buck-naked, packing their bags, and you've got women walking around in that. It couldn't be a more disgusting scene, I guarantee you that. I don't like going in there, and I'm the dad-gum coach. But we don't have the guts to go ahead and change it.

IS: What changes would you make as far as postgame locker-room access for the media?

SW: Let the media come in right after the game. [That way] that bogus argument about deadlines—which is a pile of b.s. you guys throw out—is no longer valid. The argument about catching players while their guard is down so that you can write stories where a player says something without thinking so you can damage the player, that argument's out the window. And then after 20 or 25 minutes, you blink the lights or blow a whistle and the coach has his interview. Now I win because I've had a chance to cool down and think about what I want to say, but that will make some reporters unhappy because they want to be able to catch the coach while his temper's hot and also get in there before the players get their pants on. There's a thousand solutions to the thing, and we came up with one, but since the wrong person thought of it that drew a fine.

IS: So you feel you've been discriminated against by the league office, that you've been disciplined differently than other coaches?

SW: No. I don't think they know what they're doing when they do stuff like that. I think you've got people out there who had no idea what the circumstances were following a game. They've never actually been in a locker room following a regular game. Well, I said, "Why don't you walk into a New England Patriots locker room or a Cleveland Browns locker room? And



TOM DIPACE

"I've learned from the Joe Montanas and the Boomer Esiasons [right]. I consider myself an offensive-minded guy."

ods for your teams—for example, the incident where you barred a female reporter from the locker room in 1990?

SW: That was an absolute good-faith reaction to the New England Patriots situation, which was the fault of the National Football League. The same situation has probably happened dozens, maybe hundreds, of times, but finally when it was reported the commissioner said, "Don't let it happen again"—there's a brilliant statement—"because this isn't good for football." Well, I

when you do it, why don't you strip down naked? And why don't you go in with the players and see it from their perspective? Strip down, naked, get in the shower, wet your hair down, and then let the women reporters in. And let's let your wife be one of the reporters, see how you feel about her being in there, looking around at all your buddies who are walking around with their _____ out."

It is so absurd that they have absolutely no argument other than, "This is the way we've always done it." This is one I'm not going to let go of. I've never seen [Paul Tagliabue] step out of a shower naked and give an interview. Never. He told me on the phone he had never been in a locker room after a game. He also asked me why the

out. I've seen people say Sam's right, but I guess in this case the commissioner got accomplished what he wanted. He intimidated everybody else to toe the line. If you're doing something to hurt the game, I go along with that, but I didn't do anything to hurt the game. I did something to make sure the game wasn't further hurt because it was hurt in New England. It was hurt not because of anything Victor Kiam did, or Zeke Mowatt did, or [Lisa Olson] did. It was hurt because the National Football League didn't have the foresight and doesn't have the foresight to say there are certain principles by which everyone operates, whether you're a million-dollar football player or a car salesman. It's ridiculous, but we don't have the guts. The ego's

out there that we can't threaten with the old ax? Well, no, you can't.

IS: We've discussed you and Glanville, coaches who have the audacity to be different. Buddy Ryan is another. There were nine coaching vacancies last year, and he received no offers. Is that a message to other nonconformist coaches?

SW: That's the threat. That keeps a lot of coaches in line: Hey, remember what happened to Buddy Ryan. The others all conform or they're forgotten because they didn't last very long. But, no, it didn't bother me. I felt for Buddy because he's a good football coach. Too bad.

IS: Speaking of former Eagles coaches, there is a theory you're the next Dick Vermeil burnout candidate after such incidents as the Monday night game in Buffalo last season after which you seemed emotionally out of control. Is that legitimate?

SW: That's not an incident. Flip the channel to the next coach who's arguing. It takes place every day. You see coaches battling their asses off, and I'll do that every time.

IS: What about the fact you're something of an insomniac and your focus is always on football?

SW: I only need about four or five hours of sleep a night. That's the way my metabolism

is. In season or out of season, that's all I sleep. I just wake up. But I'm not about to burn out. I'm just warming up, which scares the hell out of the National Football League, 410 Park Avenue.

IS: What's your view of the fact that John McKay is revered as the most successful coach the Buccaneers have had after winning only 33% of his games? Is the positive that you know coming in you can't do worse?

SW: Oh, I could do that.

IS: Are you capable of matching him quip for quip?

SW: That would please me. I enjoy reading about people and chuckling. I enjoy reading an article and smiling, even if it's Jerry Glanville. Jerry Glanville and I definitely have differences, but he's a good coach. I respect him for that, and he is clever as hell with his comments. I would like to be remembered as a guy who can match wits with some of these guys that are fun to read, but the job is to get this team in as good a shape to win as we can. We're either going to win or lose, and I can't tell you which it's going to be.

IS: This team has lost 108 of its last 143



players have to take a shower after the game if they're embarrassed? Why do they have to take a shower! I pointed out they had just played three hours of football, many times on dirt fields. And if they're a road team, that they didn't travel back in their uniforms on the plane. His next question was why the players didn't take their clothes into the shower with them. This is the honest truth. This is the commissioner of the National Football League! He asked me those questions on the phone, point-blank. I was taking notes to make sure I had a record of it. If we started this game all over again and they did what we're doing now, they'd laugh. It's stupid. It's idiotic. That's what the National Football League actually does. It's a policy. And if you don't do it, they spank you.

IS: Do you enjoy the maverick reputation?

SW: I don't think I am a maverick. I think like everybody else thinks; it's just that apparently I say it before somebody else does. Or I'll say something that needs to be said that maybe somebody else decides, maybe for job security reasons or political reasons, they prefer not to say just yet. They want to wait until their books come

in the way because now it will look like someone else protested and won.

IS: You don't consider yourself a maverick, but will you agree that you're different?

SW: I don't view myself as different, but I know other people do. I'm not as stupid as I look. If you asked John Q. Public in a poll, who the wild-hairs or the guys who are likely to do something to shock you are, they'd probably mention Jerry Glanville. They'd probably mention me. Then they may stop. I'm a different kind of personality from anybody else just because that's the way God created everyone: uniquely. I may be a little more willing to express myself and therefore expose myself—figuratively.

IS: Have the control freaks in the league office and among the team owners produced cookie-cutter coaches?

SW: Where I'm different is, frankly, I enjoy coaching. I love this game. If I get fired again—when I get fired again—I'll have a miserable week or two, but I don't think I'm living and dying by this profession. Getting fired didn't scare me. I think that's the worst enemy of ownership and league office personnel: You mean we've got one

games. What makes you think you can win here?

SW: The law of averages is definitely on our side. I think God takes turns going around and supporting different teams, and it's got to be our turn pretty dad-gum soon.

IS: You know there are people who think no one will ever win here?

SW: Well, they've got a lot to back that up, but defending a winning record, continuing one, is a much tougher job than claiming you're going to turn things around. We'll be the team nobody expects much of, and if you win then it's a much more exciting season. I hear what you're saying about "McKay in the Bay" and all those things. It goes the other way, too. Right now, we haven't had to back anything up. When people ask me how we're going to do, I tell them we're going to win every game. We're not going to lose a game. We might not get scored on. I'm going to tell them what they want to hear. There's no sense being practical and telling them it's going to be a tough year. Screw that. We're going to win them all. I don't even think there's a team out there that's going to come close to us.

IS: The most pivotal player in determining the outcome of your first season is your enigmatic quarterback, Vinny Testaverde. What's your opinion of him now?

SW: If you dissect him and consider his drop, the carry of the ball, the release, the arm strength, the understanding of the game—all of those things are there. He's got all of the things the quarterback has to have in order to have a chance to be a winner. The only part I don't know about—and the part I can't know about until I'm with him in a game—are the intangibles: the reaction in certain situations, the charisma in certain situations, the leadership. I've been around some of the best in the business, so the standards are high that I'll be measuring him by, but he works out every day, he's available and easy to coach, and he wants to win.

He's a quiet personality. I wouldn't call him totally withdrawn, but he's more introvert than extrovert in his mannerisms with other people and his teammates. That's something I'm going to try to draw out of him, to make him more animated as a quarterback. He has to have body language that signals to his teammates something that maybe hasn't been going on before.

IS: Is he as competitive as Joe Montana, John Elway, Jim Kelly, Esiason?

SW: "Competitiveness" is the unknown term. You have to be there right on the sidelines, with the crowd screaming, the seconds ticking, the defense coming—and then look in his eyes. Then you form your

opinion. That's the rap. I've heard the rap, and he's heard the rap. The part he has now is a clean slate with me. I'm sitting here hoping he'll come on and become a great quarterback because it will make me look like a really good coach. I mean, I could look like a genius in a New York second here. He's going to get the shot. There are people in this town who are practicing their boos because they think Vinny will get booed again, and he will—but if he only gets booed five times a game we're going to win.

IS: This is a guy who had such promise but has continually disappointed under various coaches and systems. So do you understand the skepticism about Sam

"When people ask I tell them we're not going to lose a game. We might not get scored on. There's no sense being practical and telling them it's going to be a tough year. Screw that."

Wyche making him a successful quarterback?

SW: I understand it, and I believe it to a certain extent. I've got to say to my staff, "I hear you. I hear what's gone on, and I accept the fact that it did go on and you're not lying to me. You want to win, too." But, now, I'm going to trust in him one more time with me. I consider myself an offensive-minded guy. I've been around the really good quarterbacks, and I've learned from the Joe Montanas, the Steve DeBergs, the Kenny Andersons, and the Boomer Esiasons. I'll try to share that with Vinny. Somewhere along the line, Vinny will either do it or not. But he has done it before. He was a national champion, Heisman Trophy winner. This is not a guy that has never done it. This guy has done it.

IS: Actually, you know, he never won a national championship at Miami.

SW: I didn't realize that. I know he's played on a national championship-caliber team, and they didn't get there with a bad quarterback. They got there with a good quarterback, and he was the guy. But he did

win the Heisman, right? So you've got a guy that at least had a good PR department behind him.

IS: Did you find a loser's mentality present with this team?

SW: Yeah, with some parts of the team. Right now the morale is great, especially after what they've been through the last nine seasons. The mentality is that of a team coming off a playoff year. There are a lot of teams that in their heart don't believe they're going to win. They believe they're going to get paid. They believe some people will show up, and they'll play all four quarters, but they really don't believe they're going to win. This team, I think, a large number of them—we haven't got everybody convinced—but a large number believe they're going to win. But teams don't leap from 3-13 to the Super Bowl very often. It can happen, and since it can happen we'll assume we've got a shot at it. I think everybody will be able to see a better team on the field.

IS: You've tried to create a sense of team here through some unconventional methods. Could you give us an example?

SW: We had a pop quiz in our minicamp so they could find out for themselves that they didn't have the bond winning teams have. I wanted them to know they didn't know each other very well. Basically, it's to find out what we know about our team because it's got a completely different look.

The first question is: "What position does he play?" and we list several players. The next question is: "His offseason job is?" and we list several players. The next one is: "How many cars does Keith McCants own? Part B: How many does he drive? And part C: Does he have a license?" In training camp we mixed the roommates. They don't get to room with their old buddies. They're rooming with people they don't normally associate with—a black and a white guy together or an offensive and a defensive player.

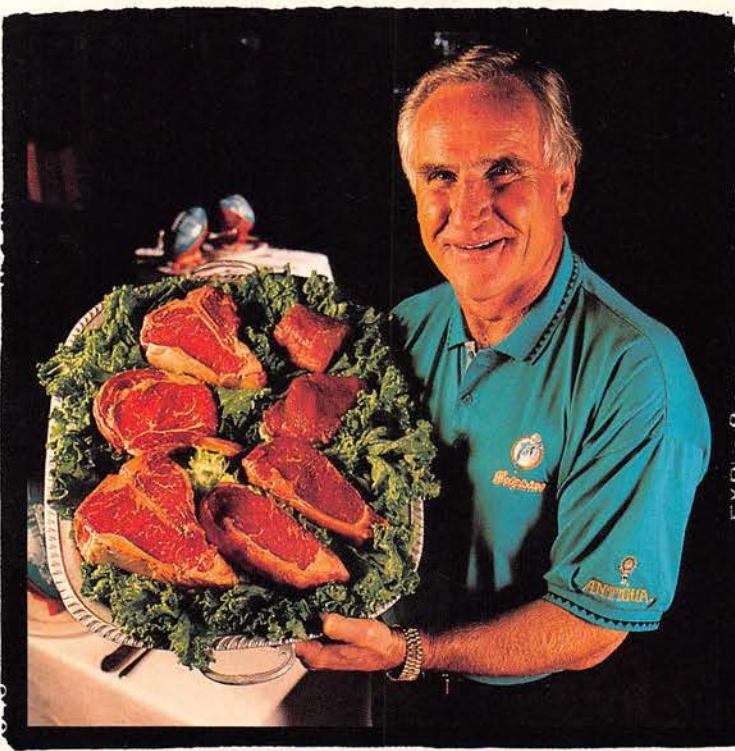
IS: You've had a successful, controversial, and enjoyable coaching career. Even if you don't win in Tampa Bay, have you reached enough of your goals to be satisfied?

SW: I think all coaches want to say they've been right there with the best there ever was, and I've been lucky to be around three football teams that have been in the Super Bowl, which is the elite of the elite. I've had a chance to see what the really good ones are like, up close, in the shower. ■

Veteran NFL scribe ED WERDER knows how Wyche feels as the new man in town; Ed's beginning his second season covering the Bucs. Give that man a doughnut.



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Warren Moon and the Oilers will get to the Super Bowl in Pasadena, where they'll end the AFC's embarrassing losing streak—NOT!

By GREG GARBER

AFC

'92

Preview

FOR TWO SEASONS NOW THE BUFFALO BILLS HAVE

been the class of the AFC, but they were bettered by the NFC

in both Super Bowls. With improving teams snapping at their

heels, the cocky Bills will slip a little this year, which will allow the high-octane Oilers to lock up the home-field advantage they desperately need to win the AFC title game.

AFC East

BUFFALO BILLS

1

AFC East

First the Giants squeezed past the Bills by a scant point in Super Bowl XXV, when Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal sailed wide right. Then Washington blitzed them early and coasted to a 37-24 victory in Super Bowl XXVI. There's definitely a trend at work here. Are the Bills in danger of becoming the second coming of the "oh-fer" Denver Broncos, who have rolled snake-eyes in four Super Bowls, three in the last six years? Well, uh, yes.

If Buffalo is going to return to the ultimate game—and it says here the Bills won't—a major attitude readjustment is in order. Losing close to the Giants only served to galvanize the Bickering Bills' resolve, but the demolition job in

Minneapolis left Buffalo reeling.

Running back Thurman Thomas totalled 2,038 yards of offense last season—and then he whined about not getting enough attention and skipped a press conference at the

Super Bowl. He was later awarded the league's MVP award, but even that didn't seem to brighten his outlook. Thomas has always used external forces to motivate himself, but he and the rest of his teammates need to concentrate on football.

The argument can be made that the Bills, 13-3 last season, are the only team in the AFC East that won't improve this year. With better things expected in New York and Miami, the defensively suspect Bills might win the division with something approaching an 11-5 record, which should allow Houston to score the home-field advantage. Even if the Bills managed to beat the Oilers in the Astrodome, how would they do against the NFC champion, which has now taken eight straight Super Bowls? It's not a pretty thought.

CHARTING THE BILLS

(1991 statistics)

First downs allowed

Bills (335)

NFL average (284)

Total yards allowed per game

NFL average (307)

Bills (341)

ANTHONY NESTE

GRADING THE BILLS	
(on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	8
Running Backs:	8
Receivers:	8
Offensive Line:	8
Defensive Line:	5
Linebackers:	7
Defensive Backs:	4
Special Teams:	4
Intangibles:	4
Coach/Front Office:	6

NEW YORK JETS

2

AFC East

Under third-year coach Bruce Coslet and general manager Dick Steinberg, the Jets have finally reached mediocrity. They finished 8-8 a year ago, made the playoffs in the final regular-season game with an overtime victory in Miami, and lost to Houston in the first round by a respectable score of 17-10. However, here is Coslet's dilemma: Do you play the numbingly efficient Ken O'Brien at quarterback and go 9-7, or throw Browning Nagle in there and maybe lose a few more games and miss the playoffs this season?

It looks as if Coslet is going with the long-term solution, just as Giants coach Ray Handley, a fellow tenant at Giants Stadium, did when he named Jeff Hostetler

his starter ahead of Phil Simms last season. Nagle, the 34th pick in the 1991 draft, will be given every opportunity to win the starting job. Clearly, Nagle's arm is the real deal; the only question is,

will the heart and

mind follow?

Well, the Jets have the luxury of five exhibition games this season, including the Hall of Fame opener, and Nagle is likely to play extensively in all five. O'Brien has always been consistent—believe it or not, he isn't that far behind the Kellys, Marinos, and Esiasons with respect to career passer rating—but in recent years his lack of mobility has become more pronounced. And last season his efficiency slipped, when he threw 11 interceptions and only 10 touchdown passes.

The defense, as organized by Pete Carroll, is the strength of this team. In defeat, the Jets held the Bills and Oilers well under their average numbers.

The good news? The Jets play in a weak division and can finish second. The bad news? The Jets have a tougher schedule this season and won't sneak up on anyone.

CHARTING THE JETS

(1991 statistics)

Red zone possessions

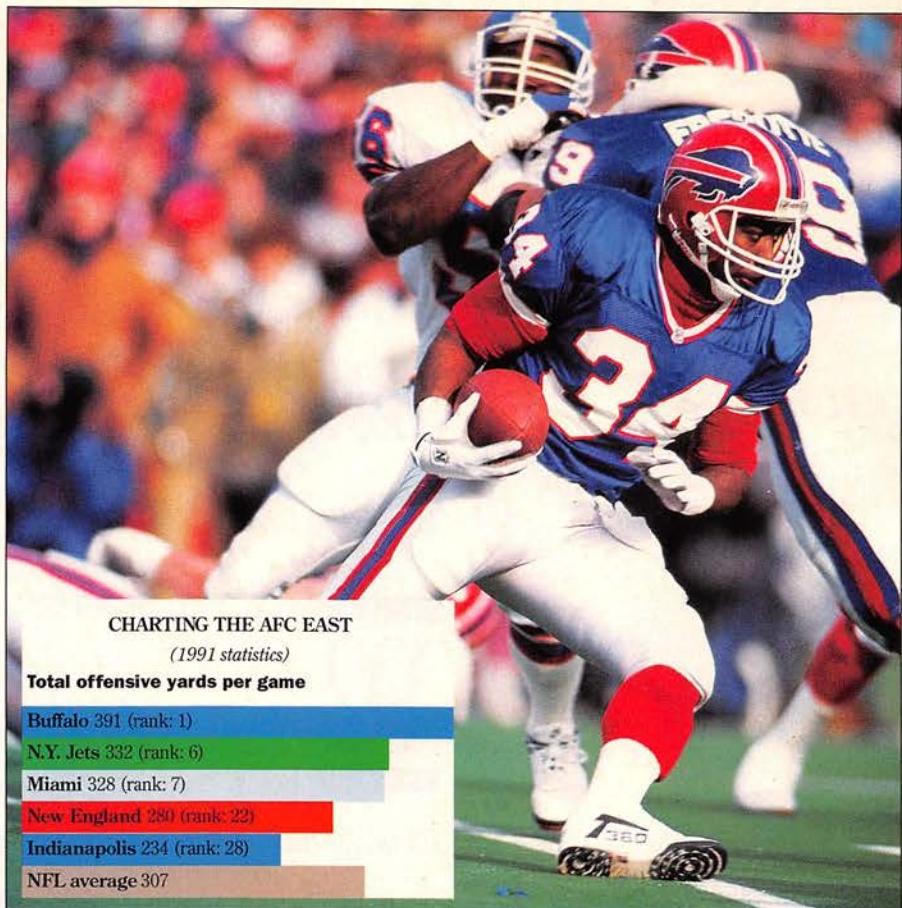
Jets (67)

NFL average (46.3)

TDs on those possessions

NFL average (22.9)

Jets (25)



Thomas may gripe, but he carries the load for the division's best offense.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

3

AFC East

Donald Francis Shula frowns. It's the Halas thing again, and he's a little uncomfortable. "Really," Shula says, "I'm just happy to be coaching in this league. People try to blow this out of proportion."

Shula is entering his 30th season as an NFL coach, and he and George Halas, the legendary Bears coach, are all alone at the top of the heap. The Dolphins' 8-8 record in 1991 pushed Shula over the 300-win mark—his career record is a giddy 306-145-6 (.676)—and only Halas, with 325 victories, stands between Shula and the all-time record. How far is Shula ahead of the rest of today's field? Chuck Knox, next on the active list, has compiled 178 wins with the Rams, Buffalo, and Seattle.

Though he is cooperative and amiable in his dealings with the media, friends say Shula is sensitive about all the record talk. He is, after all, 62 years old. In their later years, Tom Landry and Chuck Noll were

hurt when people suggested that the game of football had passed them by. Clearly, that hasn't happened to Shula.

With any kind of luck, the Dolphins should do better than .500 this season and contend for a playoff spot. Injuries hurt the Fish badly last year, but Dan Marino remains one of the league's best passers. Wideouts Mark Duper and Mark Clayton remain a formidable receiving duo, and now they'll be complemented by former Denver running back Bobby Humphrey, who was exchanged straight up for fumble-prone Sammie Smith.

Shula, who is in the last year of a three-year deal, will be back for what should be a record-breaking season in 1993. He is expected to sign at least one more three-year pact, which will help him put the record out of reach for quite some time.

CHARTING THE DOLPHINS

(1991 statistics)

First downs allowed

Dolphins (327)

NFL average (284)

Rushing yards allowed per game

NFL average (108)

Dolphins (144)

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

4

AFC East

Patriots CEO Sam Jankovich's voice fades out on the car phone. In a few seconds he breaks through the static: "Can you hear me now? I just came out of a tunnel." How appropriate.

After the crash-and-burn 1990 season, which included an equal number of victories and alleged incidents of sexual harassment (one), the Pats put together a very respectable 6-10 season. The chief reason was Jankovich, who hired coach Dick MacPherson and then presided over an impressive draft.

The big thing, Jankovich says, is that "we've brought the focus back to the playing field. It was a tough year, but we just tried to concentrate on the things we could control." Gone is owner Victor Kiam,

whose cavalier comments concerning sports writer Lisa Olson made him enemies nationwide. James Busch Orthwein is the new owner, and he promises to keep the operation fairly intact.

Last year's two

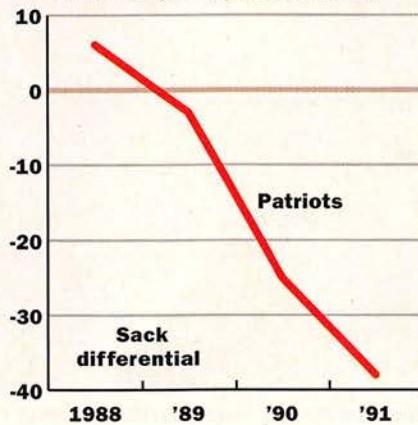
GRADING THE PATRIOTS

(on a 1-10 scale)
Quarterbacks: 3
Running Backs: 5
Receivers: 5
Offensive Line: 5
Defensive Line: 5
Linebackers: 5
Defensive Backs: 3
Special Teams: 4
Intangibles: 7
Coach/Front Office: 7

first-round draft choices, running back Leonard Russell and offensive tackle Pat Harlow, were among the best rookies in the league. The emergence of the 1991 third-round pick, guard Calvin Stephens, plus immediate help from the 1992 first-round pick, guard Eugene Chung, should pump some life into a semicomatose offense.

The Patriots' next goal is reaching .500, something that is possible but will require more concentration and consistent effort. "Last year we played in a lot of peaks and valleys," Jankovich says. "We fell out of games in the early going, too. That can't happen this year."

CHARTING THE PATRIOTS



"Pass protection" is an oxymoron in Foxboro, where Millen is hunted game.



ANTHONY NESTE

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

5

AFC East

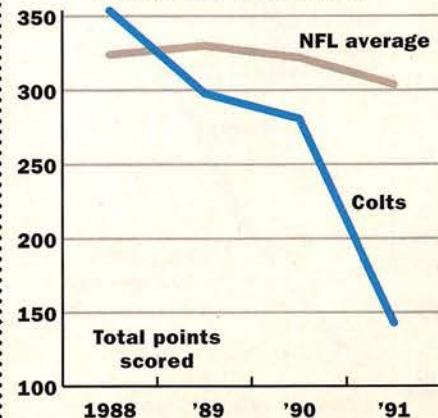
Finally, the Colts did something right. Several things, actually. General manager Jim Irsay showed uncommon patience and savvy in securing and then holding on to the NFL draft's first two picks. The Colts entered the draft with those two picks burning a hole in their pocket, and though the phones rang off the hook as the draft clock ticked, Irsay wouldn't budge. And so the Colts, 1-15 in 1991, became only the second team in league history to draft the first and second players available.

The first pick went for Washington defensive tackle Steve Emtman, the 6'4", 294-pound winner of the Outland and Lombardi Trophies. The second was used for Texas A&M linebacker Quentin Coryatt. "Not only were they the two best players available," Irsay says,

"but they were the two we needed the most." That's true enough: The team some call the Indian-hapless Dorts ranked 20th in defense a year ago. Emtman and Coryatt give the Colts two valuable starters.

At the same time, Irsay dealt the terminally unhappy Eric Dickerson to the Raiders in exchange for a fourth- and eighth-round draft choice. That void will leave the offense, led by shell-shocked quarterback Jeff George, hard-pressed to match last year's total of 143 points. However, minus Dickerson, the atmosphere in the locker room should brighten considerably, and that mood should begin to manifest itself on the field. There will be some growing pains, for sure—with George feeling most of them—but Irsay has the team heading in the right direction.

CHARTING THE COLTS



AFC Central

HOUSTON OILERS

1

It seems like only a few years ago that Warren Moon came striding out of the Canadian Football League to give the Oilers sudden credibility at quarterback—but Moon will turn 36 this season, the eighth campaign in which he's cranked up his right arm for a run at the Super Bowl. He and Houston are running out of time.

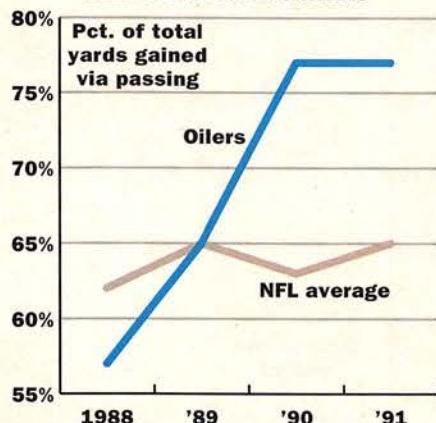
It's safe to say Moon has done everything in his power to carry the Oilers all the way. Houston had the NFL's best passing attack last season, and Moon was his usual slightly incredible self: 404 completions in 655 attempts (61.7%) and 4,690 yards. Though the touchdown and interception figures were a little too close for comfort (23 to 21), Moon also was burdened by a team that seemed to be missing something.

The Oilers, after all, are the only NFL team to make the playoffs each of the last five years. At the same time, Houston hasn't managed to get past the second round once. Considering the age of several key players and the fact that Buffalo has peaked, this is Houston's chance, a narrow window to the Super Bowl.

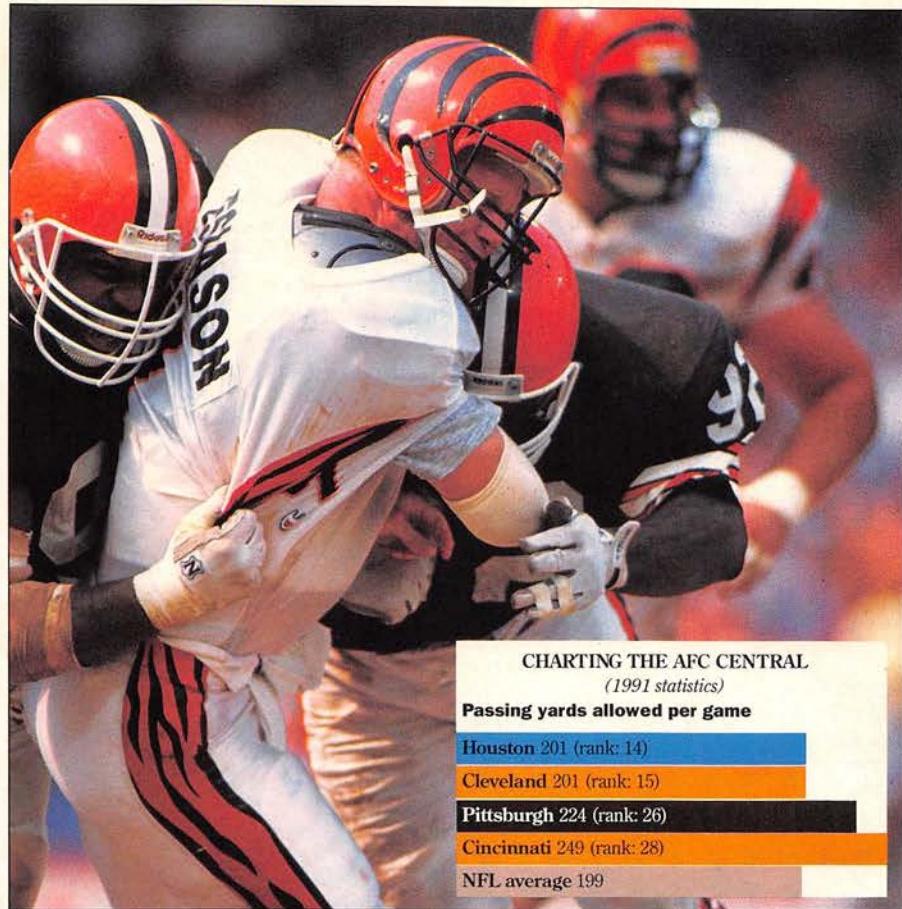
The defense, ranked ninth overall and sixth against the run, was pretty fair last year. Houston was 10-2 in the AFC but just 1-3 against the rugged NFC East, though it should have beaten Washington on the road. Maybe a little of former coach Jerry Glanville's killer instinct is needed here.

This year's tour of the NFC Central might be just what Houston needs. If the Oilers can find the missing spark, they should finally get past the second round of the playoffs—and all the way to Pasadena.

CHARTING THE OILERS



AFC Central



CHARTING THE AFC CENTRAL

(1991 statistics)

Passing yards allowed per game

Houston 201 (rank: 14)

Cleveland 201 (rank: 15)

Pittsburgh 224 (rank: 26)

Cincinnati 249 (rank: 28)

NFL average 199

Good coverage begins with a strong rush, but the Browns come up short.

CLEVELAND BROWNS

2

AFC Central

When he debuted as the Browns coach last season, Bill Belichick was a tender 39 years old and the youngest head coach in the NFL. Today, he is older, wiser, and, amazingly, the second-oldest coach in the AFC Central.

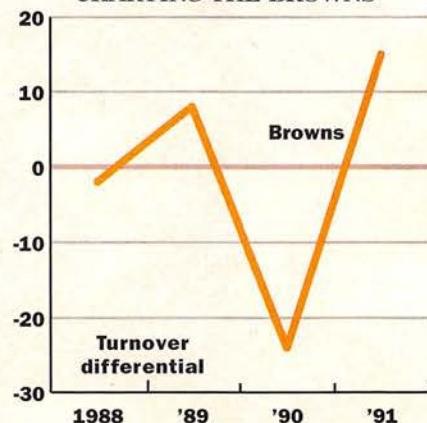
Cincinnati's David Shula and Pittsburgh's Bill Cowher are younger, but they'll have to go to great lengths to surpass the cool savvy Belichick exhibited last season in rebuilding the Browns. In 1990 Cleveland allowed a ridiculous 462 points and had a league-worst turnover net of minus-24; last season, under Belichick, the Browns cut their points allowed to 298, and the turnover net of plus-15 led the AFC.

How did Belichick do it? He hired an aggressive staff, worked 18-hour days, installed a no-nonsense game plan, built his roster with dozens of free agents, and then whipped them into shape with sizzling practices. Despite a series of key injuries, the result was an improvement from 3-13 to 6-

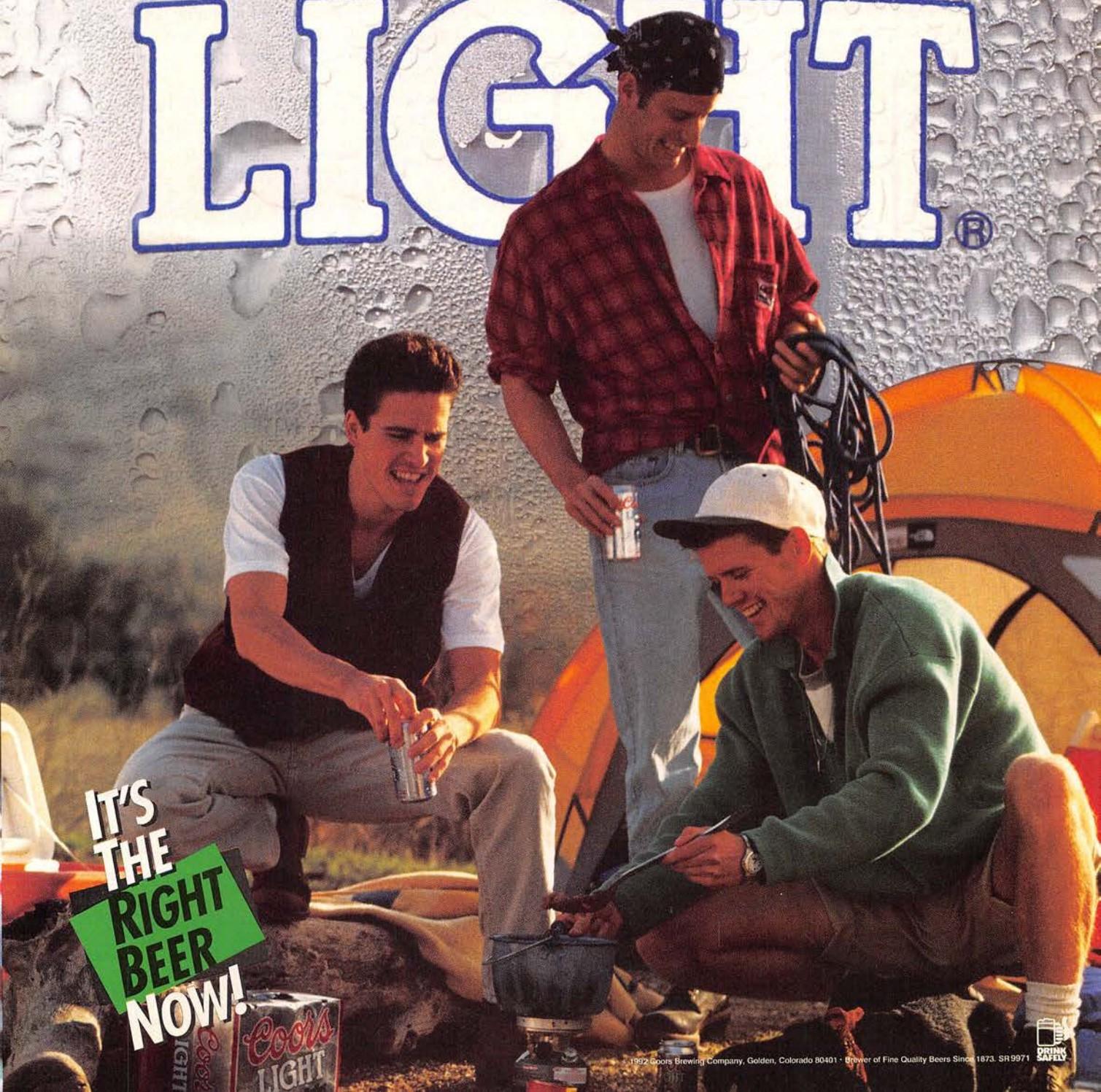
10—and six of those losses were by five points or less. This year Belichick is at it again. The Browns signed 11 Plan B free agents, more than any other team, and that sound you're hearing is the crack of pads as Cleveland hustles through its training camp two-a-days.

Of course, this is not to say the Browns are a team free of problems. The defense needs another handful of quality players, and the offense could use immediate help from first-round draft choice Tommy Vardell, the former Stanford running back, and second-rounder Patrick Rowe, a wide receiver from San Diego State.

CHARTING THE BROWNS



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PITTSBURGH STEELERS

3

When he was growing up in Crafton, Pa., Bill Cowher remembers going to Steelers games at Pitt Stadium. The coach who stalked the sidelines was Chuck Noll, who would lead Pittsburgh to four Super Bowl victories.

When Cowher was introduced as the Steelers coach back in January he was 34, three years younger than Noll was when he joined the Steelers in 1969. Cowher knows precisely what he's getting into.

"Chuck Noll is a legend," he says. "What Chuck Noll has done is brought tradition and pride to this city. And that's what I'm going to try to do also, in my own way."

And that way hasn't been half bad. Cowher has worked as an assistant for the Browns and Kansas City. Most recently he

GRADING THE STEELERS	
(on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	4
Running Backs:	4
Receivers:	5
Offensive Line:	4
Defensive Line:	5
Linebackers:	4
Defensive Backs:	5
Special Teams:	4
Intangibles:	5
Coach/Front Office:	5

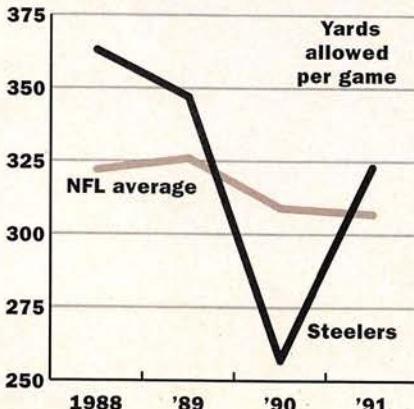
was the Chiefs defensive coordinator, and during his three years in that role Kansas City developed a brutal, dominating NFC-style defense.

Unfortunately for Cowher, the sagging Steelers don't have the talent the

Chiefs possess along either line of scrimmage. Hard work will have to fill the void for a team that was 7-9 last year. Cowher is a two-a-day, seven-days-a-week kind of guy. The new offensive coordinator is Ron Erhardt, who won two Super Bowls with the Giants' ugly and efficient running offense. Dom Capers, previously the New Orleans defensive backs coach, will oversee Cowher's defense.

Cowher, 35, has been hearing that he is too young all his life, but this marks Cowher's 13th season in the NFL as a player and coach. "From playing to coaching, I never missed a beat," he says. "I've got a good association with the coaches in the NFL, and I understand the trends."

CHARTING THE STEELERS



CINCINNATI BENGALS

4

AFC Central

Don't expect much from the Bengals for a few years. The record in 1991 was a pathetic 3-13. The defense was ranked last in the league a year ago and allowed a staggering 435 points. The average score was a 27-16 loss.

Recognizing that the future is hardly now, the Bengals did some long-term housekeeping in the offseason. First, they sent Sam Wyche packing to Tampa Bay and promoted precocious David Shula (he's only 33 years old) from wide receivers coach to head coach. Then the Bengals surprised most NFL observers on draft day by cutting a deal with Washington and dropping down from fourth to sixth overall. The Redskins landed Heisman Trophy winner Desmond Howard, and Cincinnati

shocked everyone (including Boomer Esiason) by taking former Houston quarterback David Klingler.

"He kept coming up as the best player on the board," says general manager Mike Brown. "When you get a

quarterback with that good of talent, you better snap him up because you might not get that chance for the next decade."

Klingler has a terrific arm (he has thrown the ball 84 yards in practice), a pro body (6'2", 205 pounds), plus rare agility (he high-jumps 6'9" and long-jumps 25 feet) and strength (he bench-presses 325 pounds). The downside is that it will take at least several years to deprogram him from those wild run-and-shoot days at Houston. During the transition, Esiason will call the signals.

So don't worry about the offense; it's the defense that will remain vulnerable for several years. Later in the draft, the Bengals selected Miami safety Darryl Williams but couldn't resist spending the 31st overall pick on Tennessee wideout Carl Pickens, who left school early.

CHARTING THE BENGALS

(1991 statistics)

Yards allowed per game

Bengals (353)

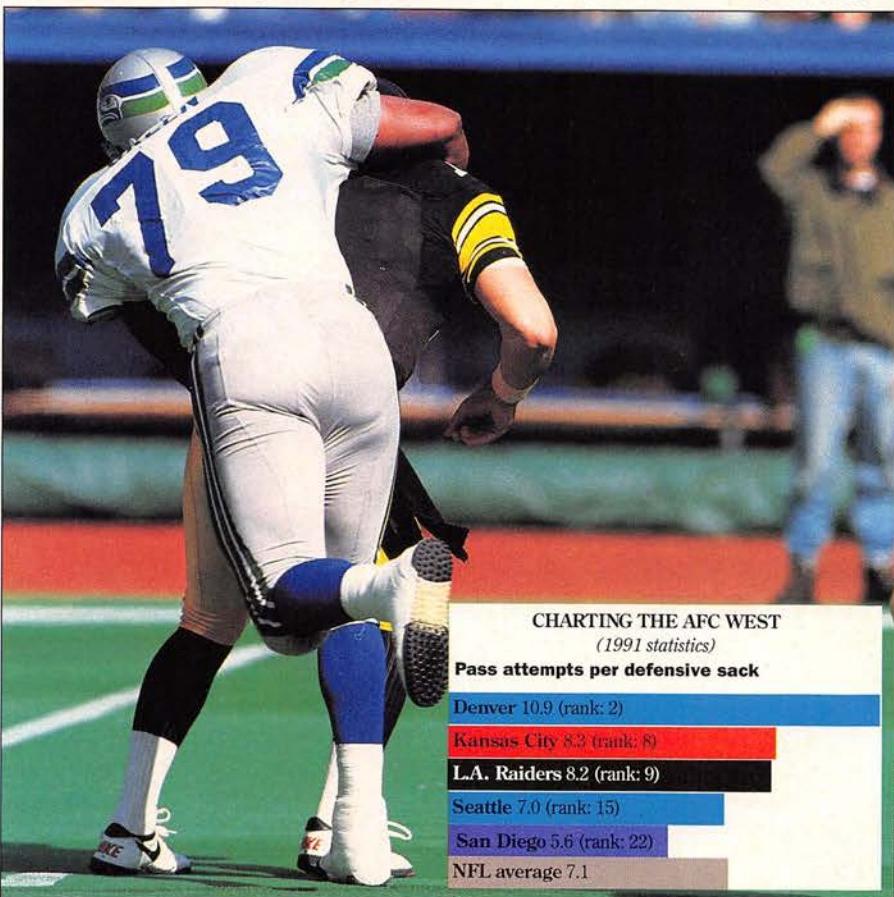
NFL average (307)

Points allowed per game

NFL average (19)

Bengals (27.2)

The Seahawks are only average in a division that prides itself on pressure.



AFC West

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

1

Over the years the Chiefs had grown tired of losing to Dave Krieg, and the game in November 1990 might have put them over the top. "He got knocked down 13 times, seven by Derrick Thomas, and he threw the winning touchdown on the final play," says Kansas City general manager Carl Peterson. "We appreciate what a great competitor he is."

The Chiefs liked Krieg so much they made him a free-agent offer he couldn't refuse. And so, the team some believe was a quarterback away from a legitimate run at the Super Bowl sliced four years from the age of its starting passer. The 38-year-old Steve DeBerg is gone, and Krieg, who will turn 34 this season, is the man.

Krieg has fashioned the eighth-highest

GRADING THE CHIEFS
(on a 1-10 scale)
Quarterbacks: 6
Running Backs: 9
Receivers: 4
Offensive Line: 7
Defensive Line: 5
Linebackers: 6
Defensive Backs: 6
Special Teams: 5
Intangibles: 6
Coach/Front Office: 6

passer rating in NFL history, at 82.3. "I think I can help this team," he says. "I've been around them a lot in the AFC West, and they're knocking on the door." DeBerg, it should be noted, led the

Chiefs to two consecutive playoff berths and was 22-13 in his last 35 games. However, Krieg seems to be a better match for a team that already brings defense and a running game to the party. Krieg threw just 11 interceptions in 1986 when Curt Warner led the AFC in rushing.

Sure, there are a few questions: (1) Can the Chiefs finally push past Denver and win this division? (2) Will first-round draft choice Dale Carter compensate for an undermanned and overrated secondary? (3) Is one ball enough for the backfield trio of Christian Okoye, Barry Word, and Harvey Williams?

The answer to all three questions is maybe. The only certainty is that Krieg should come up big. What else would you expect from an alumnus of the late Milton College?

CHARTING THE CHIEFS

*(1991 statistics)***Red zone possessions allowed**

Chiefs (46)

NFL average (46.3)

TDs allowed on those possessions

NFL average (22.9)

Chiefs (15)

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

2

It wasn't that many years ago that Bobby Beathard was hailed by a national magazine (its initials are *S.I.*, as opposed to *I.S.*) as "the smartest man in football." However, after two years of scuffling as San Diego's general manager, Beathard doesn't look so sharp. During those two seasons, the Chargers have played well at times but have been inconsistent, especially on offense. Their two-year mark is only 10-22, and there are more questions surrounding this team than the three-way presidential race.

In response, Beathard ditched coach Dan Henning and brought in some teachers from the college ranks. Bobby Ross is the new head man, and his defensive coordi-

nator will be Bill Arnsperger. They have plenty of work ahead of them.

The Chargers, 4-12 last year, start John Friesz at quarterback. Beathard thinks Friesz can play, though some personnel men disagree, pointing to

his 4-13 record as a starter. This is the year we find out. Beathard's trade of defensive end Lee Williams hurt the defense so badly the unit fell from fifth overall in '90 to 19th. The good news is that there still are some solid players there, including linebacker Junior Seau. Arnsperger's laid-back philosophy may suit the personnel better than Ron Lynn's scheme.

On the bright side, San Diego plays a fifth-place schedule that features a number of cupcakes, including Indianapolis (twice), Tampa Bay, Cincinnati, and Phoenix. All told, there are six rookie coaches on the schedule. The AFC West teams are hoping to catch San Diego early in the season while the offense looks to get untracked and the coaching staff gets adjusted. Later in the season, the Chargers will be tough.

CHARTING THE CHARGERS

*(1991 statistics)***Yards per rush attempt**

Chargers (4.8)

NFL average (3.9)

Yards per pass attempt

NFL average (6.89)

Chargers (5.84)

NEW MEDIUM



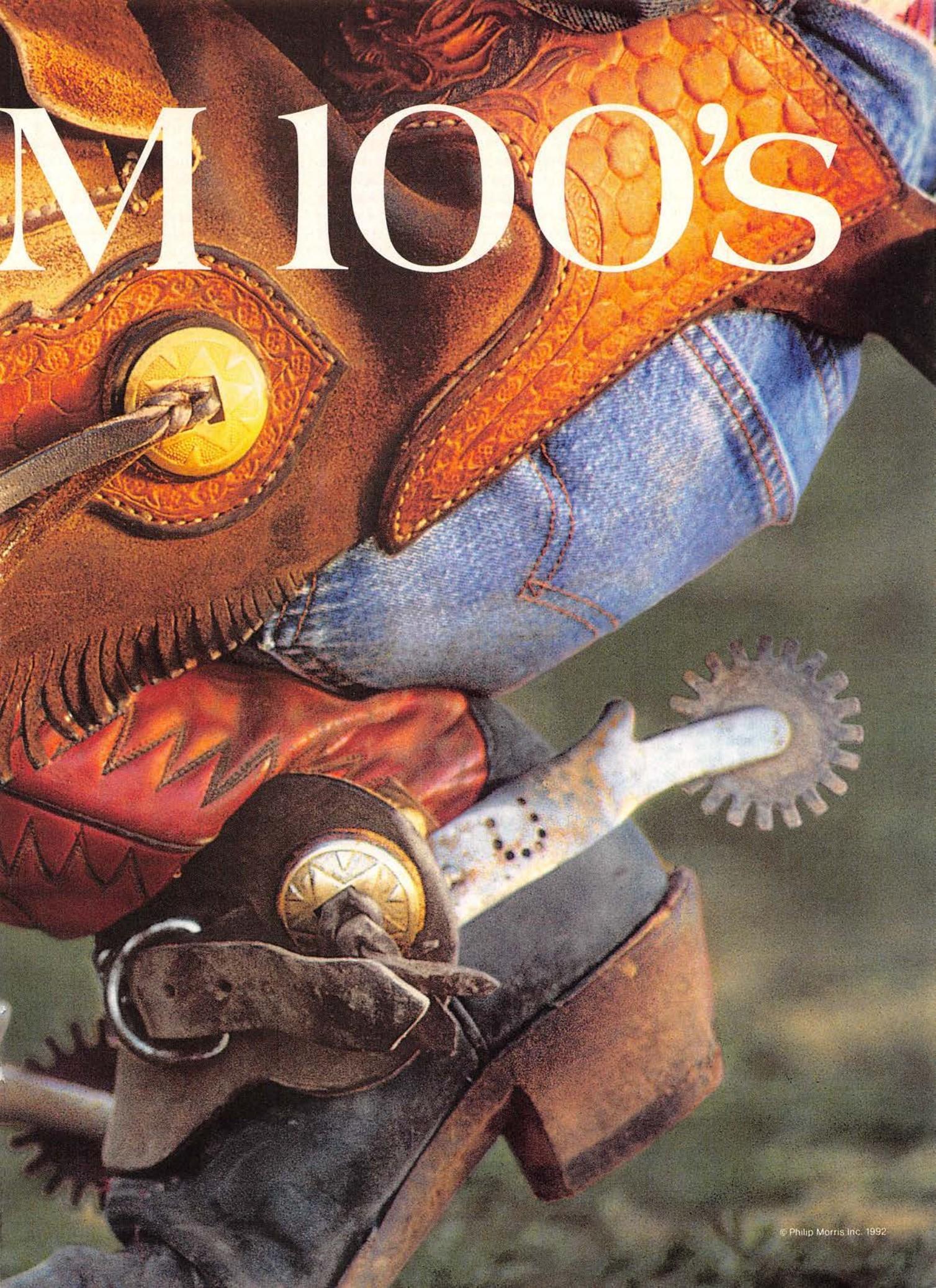
A special place in Marlboro Country.

The low tar cigarette
that's long on flavor.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

13 mg "tar," 1.0 mg nicotine
av. per cigarette by FTC method.

M100's



DENVER BRONCOS

3 In ecologically correct Denver, natural resources are handled with care—with one exception. If the offensive line continues to crumble, quarterback John Elway may find himself on the list of endangered species.

Elway is personally responsible for the Broncos' four appearances in the AFC Championship Game over the last six years, but Denver has allowed him to take a savage beating the last few seasons. The rising numbers are telling: 30 sacks in 1988, 35 in '89, 43 in '90, and 45 in '91.

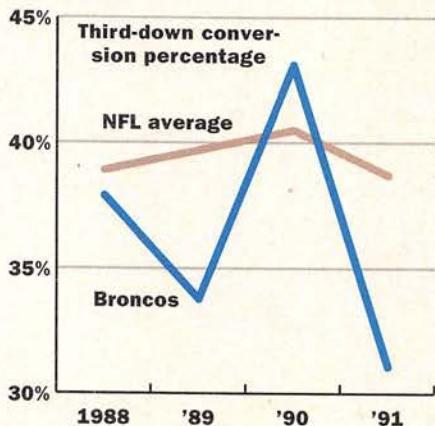
Elway has an extremely delicate throwing shoulder, which can be traced to the painfully inadequate protection his linemen have given him. The Hogs they are not. Left tackle Jeff Davidson, the 111th

GRADING THE BRONCOS	
(on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	7
Running Backs:	6
Receivers:	6
Offensive Line:	3
Defensive Line:	5
Linebackers:	6
Defensive Backs:	7
Special Teams:	6
Intangibles:	6
Coach/Front Office:	5

choice in the 1990 draft, was forced to step in for the tradged Gerald Perry and didn't perform terribly well. In fact, the Broncos traded for Detroit's Harvey Salem, who replaced Davidson in obvious passing situations, and Davidson and Salem could split the job again this year. At right tackle, the other key pass-blocking spot, Ken Lanier has played in 152 consecutive games, and the wear and tear is starting to show.

As you can imagine, Elway is not exactly looking forward to this season's schedule, which includes games against Houston's William Fuller (15 sacks) and two each vs. Kansas City's Derrick Thomas (13 1/2) and the Raiders' Greg Townsend (13)—not to mention a swing through the rugged NFC East and marauders such as Reggie White, Lawrence Taylor, and Charles Mann. Only six months until the Rockies hit spring training.

CHARTING THE BRONCOS



LOS ANGELES RAIDERS

4 Five years ago Eric Dickerson left Los Angeles in a huff because he felt the Rams weren't giving him the respect or the money he deserved. Dickerson got his money in Indianapolis, but he also got the Colts, which ultimately was no bargain. Now, the running back (who will turn 32 in September) seems to have seen the light. He's back in Los Angeles, this time as a Raider. At his introductory press conference he actually said, "Money isn't everything."

In truth, however, Dickerson had little choice. He had a \$2.2 million contract with the Colts but they wanted no part of him, so he was shipped back to the West Coast in exchange for a fourth- and eighth-round draft choice. Dickerson will take a pay cut

(he's pencilled in for a paltry \$1.5 million), but he should play regularly.

The Raiders, who have made a habit of rescuing veterans from the scrapheap, are thrilled to have the No. 3 rusher of all time on their roster.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

5 Tom Flores' three-year reign as Seattle's president and general manager was marked by inertia. The Seahawks were 7-9 in 1989, 9-7 the next year, and 7-9 again last season. Yawn.

Then Flores kicked himself downstairs. With the departure of Chuck Knox, Flores is a coach again, and he brings impressive credentials to the job: His record with the Raiders from 1979 to '87 was a dazzling 91-56. On the day before the draft, Flores flexed his long-dormant muscles in a pair of trades that suggest the Seahawks think the future is now.

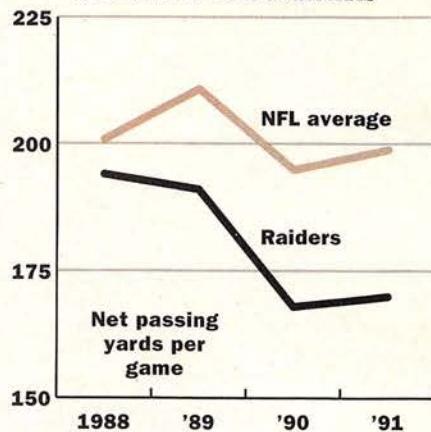
Seattle spent a second- and a fourth-round pick and received Minnesota defensive lineman Keith Millard and New Orleans running back Rueben Mayes in return. "I didn't make these trades for five years from now," Flores says. "I made them for right now. Time will tell, but sometimes you've got to make gutsy decisions."

Millard's health is questionable, but his attitude could

With Roger Craig gone to Minnesota via Plan B and Bo Jackson out of the mix, the Raiders will split the tailback job between Dickerson, Nick Bell, who was terrific as a rookie, and Marcus Allen.

The real question is, how will Dickerson respond? The tattered state of the Colts offensive line made it impossible to determine whether or not Dickerson had lost a step. The Raiders have a way of squeezing big years out of guys who seem played out (last season safety Ronnie Lott led the NFL with eight interceptions at the age of 32), but maybe it's time to start finding more help in the draft.

CHARTING THE RAIDERS

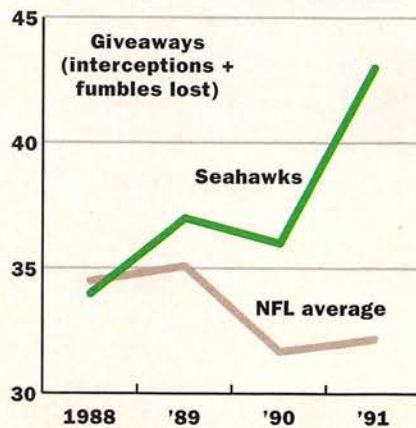


help energize this surprisingly adequate defense. Linebacker Rufus Porter (10 sacks last year) is the only dangerous pass-rush threat. Mayes, if he is healthy, will add depth in the offensive backfield.

Flores used the 10th overall pick of the draft for 6'6", 304-pound offensive tackle Ray Roberts of Virginia. Roberts is a keeper, but whom will he protect? With the departure of free-agent Dave Krieg, Kelly Stouffer and Dan McGwire will engage in an ugly quarterback competition.

No, it isn't pretty in Seattle. It may take Flores another three years to build a contender.

CHARTING THE SEAHAWKS



"How Does Arnold Do It?"

JW: John, you've had one heck of a year.

JA: Thanks, Jay, I know.

JW: Let's go over the highlights: two perfect games, 17 in the "W" column, a phenomenal 1.85 ERA, 10 homers, 26 RBI's, and three walks...

JA: One, really. Ramirez stepped into the pitch.

JW: You mean the *late* Pascual Ramirez?

JA: Right.

JW: Regardless, John, you're one hot item. You took the Tuna Salad Invitational Fishing Tournament in Cleveland in the off-season, too.

JA: Y'know, if we can stop for just a second, I'd like to tell your readers something...

JW: Sure.

JA: I'd like to congratulate anybody totally nuts enough to have read this far. Reason being, the first 1,000 folks to write will win a free PayDay Totally Nuts T-Shirt. Just write: PayDay Surprise T-Shirt Offer, P.O. Box 4048, Monticello, MN 55565-4048. (One size fits all.) This offer is running in several magazines during August, September and October, so mail in your request promptly because we can only honor the first 1,000.

JW: Fair enough, John. Anything else I'm forgetting?

JA: Yeah, I've beaten my 10-year-old son at every Nintendo game in existence. His ego's a little bruised, but he's got to learn about losing. It's pretty important. You've gotta' be humble, ya' know? And I believe humiliation is the best way to learn humbleness.

JW: Couldn't agree more, John. So how do you do, John? Are you training differently? More weights? New diet? New sleep habits? What's the

secret behind John Arnold's success?

JA: It's attitude, Jay. It's all totally attitude. Look, I'm 30 years old. Guys half my age are gunning for my job so I've gotta' keep a totally open and "up" attitude. Now all I think about is winning. And the screenplay I'm writing.

JW: Screenplay?

JA: That's right, Jay. I'm seeking total spiritual and financial harmony by channeling my energy into this screenplay. The working title is "Beyond Relief: the John Arnold Story."

JW: I like it. Another baseball wordplay thing.

JA: Yes, it's kind of a theme. It's about how I started out as a young, naive, country boy and rose to stardom when I took a mighty bus to the big city. It's got drama, adventure, baseball, some racy stuff and more baseball. What's really exciting about it, Jay, is that I'm gonna' play myself.

JW: That's fascinating, John. I didn't realize you were an actor.

JA: Well, you've seen my commercials, right?

JW: Uh huh.

JA: I've gotten a lot better since then. Anyway, the other exciting thing is that Odilia DeCampi, the famous Italian movie goddess, is gonna' play my sweetheart when I was in Indiana.

JW: Isn't that a little weird, John? I mean, an Italian film goddess playing a wholesome country girl from the Midwest?

JA: Well, once she loses the accent, I'm pretty sure she'll be great. I mean, she's really versatile. I think she sees it as a challenge.

JW: So, she needs the work?

JA: Yeah,

JW: That too.

JA: A great season, a screenplay and victorious tuna fishing. Whew.

JW: Next for John? Full Aut. Arnold?

JA: Food.

JW: You mean you're gonna' open a restaurant or

PAYDAY
PEANUT BAR
PAYDAY IS ALMOST TOTALLY NUTS!

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JA: No.

I'm thinking about downing this PayDay candy bar. It's got the taste I like and it's loaded with peanuts. Why, Jay, when I want a delicious, downright dandy candy...this pitcher goes almost totally nuts when he hears the word

Ga





ang Green

Green

You can hide but you can't run on Philly's defense, which will turn NFC foes—yes, you too, Washington—into cream cheese this year

By GARY MYERS

N F C

92

Preview

The Redskins are the last NFC team to win the Super Bowl. They're also the last NFC team to lose the Super Bowl, and the losing part is more historically significant. The NFC has won eight straight Super Bowls—and expect more of the same this season. The conference's top teams—the Redskins, Eagles, and 49ers—are the NFL's best, and we say the Eagles will go all the way.

NFC East

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

1

NFC East The Knee. It deserves capital letters because it can be the difference in Philadelphia between not making the playoffs again and winning the Super Bowl. That's how much Randall Cunningham's left knee matters to the Eagles.

Last year the Birds won 10 games by playing Jim McMahon, Pat Ryan, Brad Goebel, and Jeff Kemp at quarterback. Our choice of the Eagles as the NFC representative in Pasadena in January is based on a simple premise: Even if Cunningham is just 80%, that's better than 100% of the crew that played last year, which combined to throw only 17 scoring passes.

Now we're assuming that the defense will play at the inspired level it reached a year ago. Seth Joyner emerged as one of

the膝. It deserves capital letters because it can be the difference in Philadelphia

Rich Kotite did a superb coaching job in his rookie season. Cunningham annually accounts for 75% of the Eagles' offensive yards; take that away from any team and it's tough to win in double figures.

Of course, the Eagles still have problems. Their running game hasn't scared anybody since Wilbert Montgomery, although they addressed the situation by taking Siran Stacy in the second round, and their secondary is still vulnerable on the rare days that Reggie and Co. don't provide the big-time pressure.

Considering the severity of the injury to Cunningham, it's unfair to think he will come back scrambling right away—but just having him back and nearly at full strength could be enough to make it three different NFC East teams in the Super Bowl in the last three years.

GRADING THE EAGLES (on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	7
Running Backs:	4
Receivers:	7
Offensive Line:	4
Defensive Line:	9
Linebackers:	8
Defensive Backs:	6
Special Teams:	5
Intangibles:	8
Coach/Front Office:	7

DAMIAN STRONCHER/ALLSPORT

the top linebackers in the league to go along with that killer front of Reggie White, Jerome Brown, and Clyde Simmons. White is going into the final year of his contract, so he's going to kick it into salary overdrive.

CHARTING THE EAGLES (1991 statistics)

Percentage of pass completions allowed

Eagles (44.1)

NFL average (57.4)

Rushing first downs allowed

NFL average (98.5)

Eagles (53)

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

2

NFC East

The last time the Redskins defended a Super Bowl championship, everybody was wondering whether the Skins were that good or a strike-season aberration. The answer: aberration. They went 7-9 in 1988—the only losing season in Joe Gibbs' 11 years near Capitol Hill.

The Redskins are defending Super Bowl champs again, coming off a 14-2 season and a postseason in which they outscored the Falcons, Lions, and Bills by a mere 61 points. However, don't count on Washington going down the toilet again. Management has sent a message this year: We're not fooling around.

How so? About the last thing the Redskins needed going into their title defense was another target for Mark (Mad Bomber II) Rypien. Working with the game's best threesome in Art Monk, Gary Clark, and Ricky Sanders, Ryp threw 28 touchdowns last year and posted an average gain of nearly 8.5 yards per attempt.

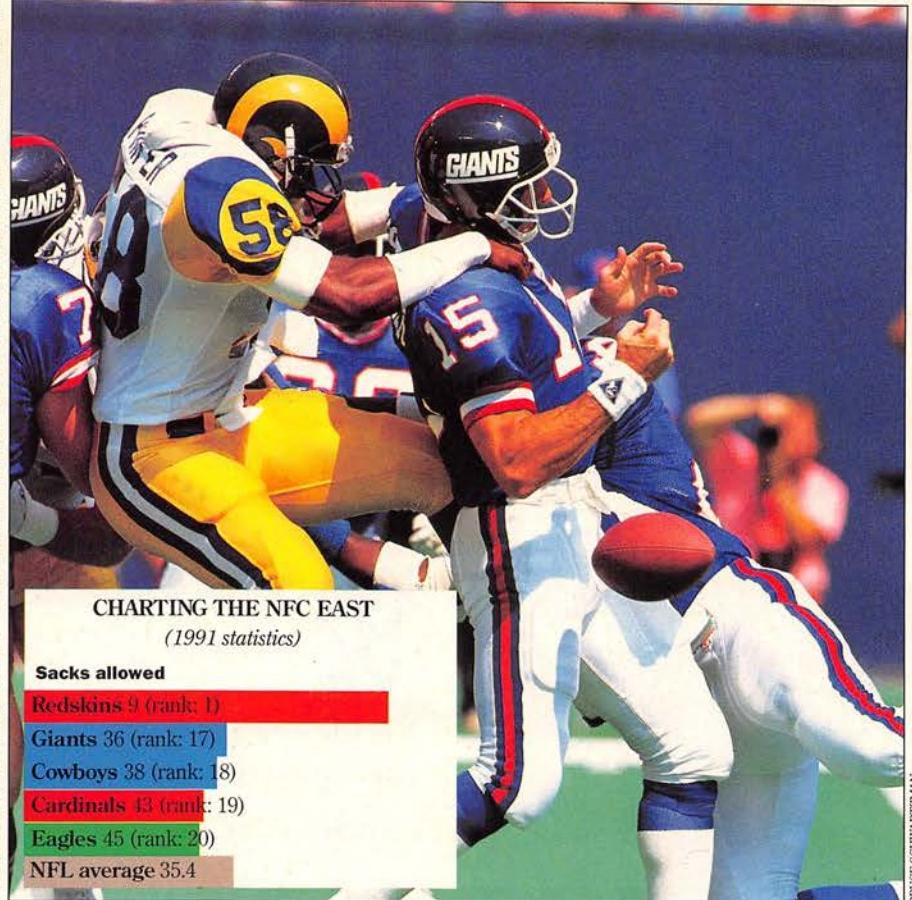
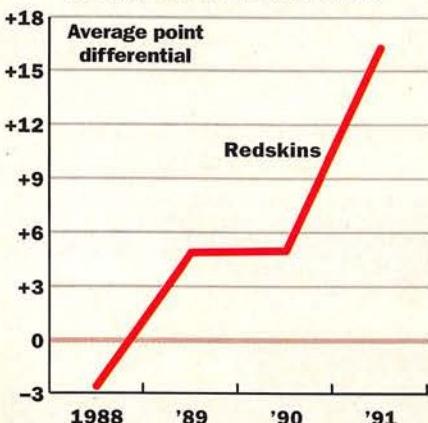
GRADING THE REDSKINS
(on a 1-10 scale)
Quarterbacks: 8
Running Backs: 7
Receivers: 9
Offensive Line: 8
Defensive Line: 7
Linebackers: 6
Defensive Backs: 6
Special Teams: 7
Intangibles: 7
Coach/Front Office: 9

The Redskins then maneuvered to get the only bona fide game-breaker in the draft in Heisman-winning wide receiver Desmond Howard, who had 19 touchdown catches last season.

It was a parity-busting move. The NFL is designed to make the bad teams good and the good teams bad, but Redskins general manager Charley Casserley's ploy beat the system. "Charley made a bold move," Gibbs says. "You always look for guys with no holes. We looked at films forever on the top guys, and Desmond is one guy who had no holes."

The Redskins were smart, and that's why they have enough to make a serious run at defending their title.

CHARTING THE REDSKINS



CHARTING THE NFC EAST

(1991 statistics)

Sacks allowed

Redskins 9 (rank: 1)	
Giants 36 (rank: 17)	
Cowboys 38 (rank: 18)	
Cardinals 43 (rank: 19)	
Eagles 45 (rank: 20)	
NFL average 35.4	

Hostetler learns the hard way that NFC East teams aren't kind to their QBs.

DALLAS COWBOYS

3 They have Troy Aikman, Michael Irvin, and Emmitt Smith, and are good enough to make people mad again, but you know who's the most important piece of the Cowboys puzzle? Jimmy Johnson. He has done one of the most amazing reclamation/reconstruction projects in the shortest period of time in NFL history. In his first 37 months he made 41 trades, improved the Cowboys from 1-15 to 7-9 to 11-5, and this season has them positioned to contend for the Super Bowl for the first time since 1983.

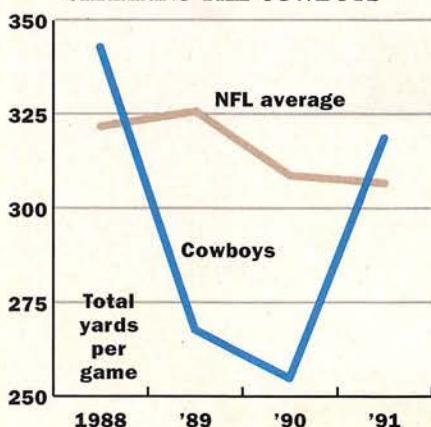
Two things set Johnson apart: He isn't afraid to gamble and risk failure, which is inevitable when you make so many trades, and he doesn't have to fight through the red tape of his organization to get things done. No coach has more power than Johnson; he works for his buddy, Jerry Jones, who relies on Johnson to make the football moves.

Johnson benefited big-time on the Herschel Walker trade. He may have overplayed his

hand by taking Steve Walsh in the '89 supplemental draft just two months after taking Aikman; although he eventually received picks in the first three rounds from the Saints for Walsh, Johnson surrendered what turned out to be the No. 1 pick in the 1990 draft to take Walsh.

The Cowboys' biggest problem is playing in the NFC East. Washington won the Super Bowl last year; Philly won 10 games without Randall Cunningham, and the Giants at least are going to be competitive. The Boys could be better than last year and not win 11 games, or they could explode and win 14.

CHARTING THE COWBOYS



NEW YORK GIANTS

4

NFC East Through the '80s the Giants had three dominant personalities and voices: Bill Parcells, Phil Simms, and Lawrence Taylor. When you talk about the Giants now, though, you have a team in the midst of an incredible transition. Today's Giants are led by Ray Handley, a coach who must win this year to save his job after going 8-8; Jeff Hostetler, who replaced the best quarterback in franchise history with shaky results; and Taylor, who only occasionally is the LT of old.

Did somebody say fourth place again?

Handley and Hoss will be in charge of the Giants' immediate future—and based on last year's results you would have to say the Giants were better off with Parcells and Simms. Handley struggled through his

rookie season, and he has dedicated the 1992 season to making the Giants a Ray Handley team. He says he has eliminated the double standard he allowed for the team's elite players. (We'll have to see Handley get

Taylor on the scout team before we believe it.) He also has restructured the coaching staff to get more of his own people in. He presumably will let loose offensively, because last year he was more conservative than Parcells ever dreamed. And you would have to think that the Giants will adjust better during games.

Hostetler had a miracle ride through the '90 playoffs, but after he surprisingly beat out Simms last summer he was only 6-5 as a starter. He threw just five touchdowns in 285 attempts, his touchdown percentage of 1.8% was 27th among starters, and the Giants struggled to get the ball into the endzone.

Hoss is clearly Handley's guy, just as Simms was Parcells' guy, but the Handley-Hoss tandem was panned on Broadway during its debut. If it doesn't get better reviews this year the show will close.

CHARTING THE GIANTS

Fourth-quarter points allowed in '90

Giants (99)

NFL average (86)

Fourth-quarter points allowed in '91

NFL average (90)

Giants (129)

PHOENIX CARDINALS

5

NFC East

Doomed. That must be it. The Cardinals are one of those teams that never seem to get any better. The Cards get off to bad starts and finish 6-10. They get off to good starts, like they did last year, and finish 4-12. They have a Pro Bowl quarterback in Neil Lomax, and he retires prematurely with a hip problem. They draft quarterback Kelly Stouffer but trade him a year later when they can't sign him. And they draft quarterback Timm Rosenbach, who appears to be the real thing, then he rips up his knee. Doomed.

The Cardinals move from St. Louis to Phoenix in 1988 to grab the league's No. 1 expansion market. It's considered a gold mine; the people are dying to get an NFL team. Then Bill Bidwill alienates the community with his unconscionable ticket prices, and the gold mine is turned into a land mine. Even when Phoenix is awarded the Super Bowl for the 1992 season, Commissioner Paul Tagliabue takes it away because the

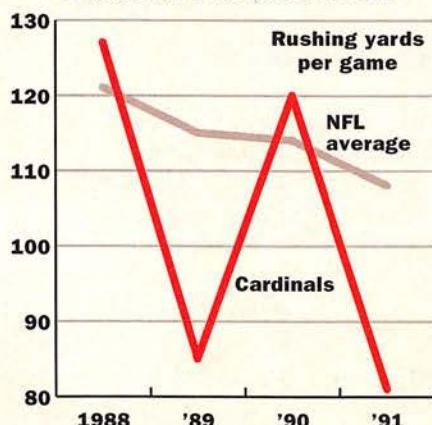
GRADING THE CARDINALS
(on a 1-10 scale)
Quarterbacks: 4
Running Backs: 4
Receivers: 6
Offensive Line: 4
Defensive Line: 5
Linebackers: 5
Defensive Backs: 5
Special Teams: 5
Intangibles: 4
Coach/Front Office: 5

state of Arizona vetoed Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Will they ever get better? Last year the Cardinals drafted defensive end Eric Swann with the sixth pick overall. Gamble city: Swann has a ton of potential, but he didn't play any college football and had a quiet rookie year compounded by a knee injury. Then the Cardinals bit when the Dolphins offered wide receiver Randal Hill, the 23rd pick in the weak '91 draft, for Phoenix's No. 1 (which turned out to be seventh overall) in the loaded '92 draft. Why does this always happen to the Cardinals?

Because they're doomed.

CHARTING THE CARDINALS

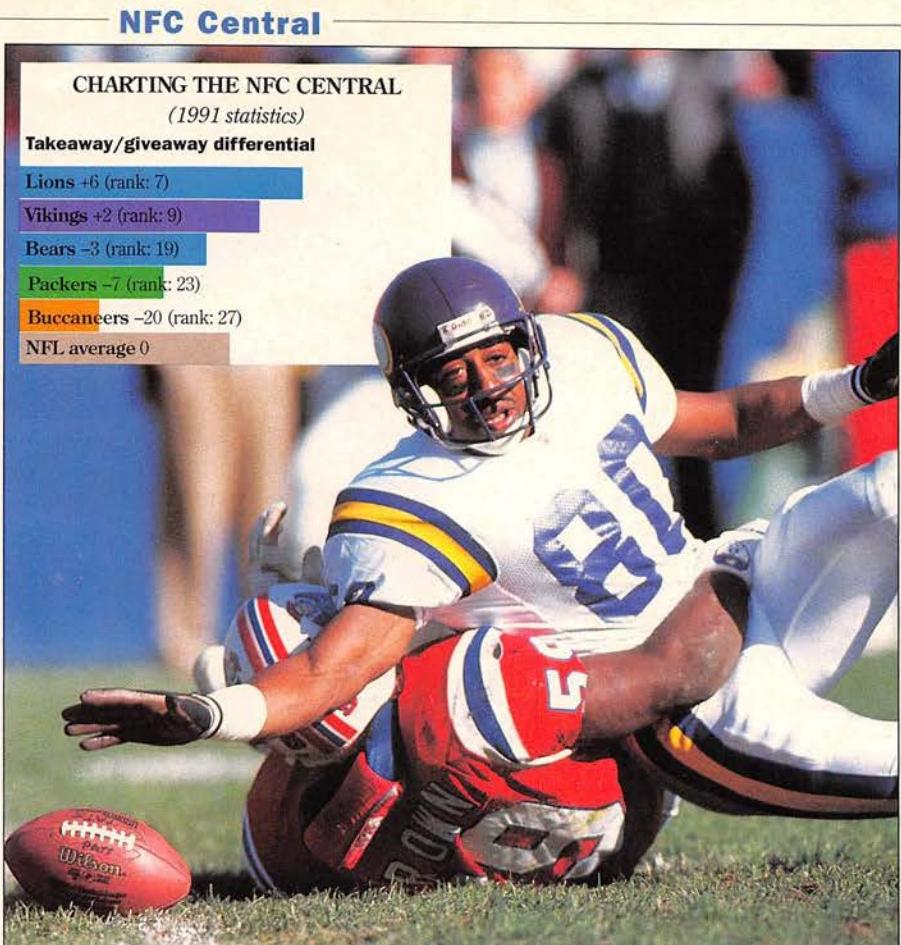


CHARTING THE NFC CENTRAL

(1991 statistics)

Takeaway/giveaway differential

Lions +6 (rank: 7)
Vikings +2 (rank: 9)
Bears -3 (rank: 19)
Packers -7 (rank: 23)
Buccaneers -20 (rank: 27)
NFL average 0



ANTHONY NESTE

Cris Carter lets this one get away, but the Vikings had a plus-2 turnover mark.

DETROIT LIONS

1

NFC Central The 1991 season was the year that the meek inherited the NFL. The Cowboys rose up from mediocrity and the Saints and Oilers each captured their first-ever division titles. The Falcons, absent from the postseason since 1982, put together a surprising 10-6 season and added another victory in the playoffs. And then there were the Lions.

By the time the 1991 season came to a close, nobody had made more progress from the have-nots of the NFL than the Lions. They won 12 games. They won the NFC Central. They made it all the way to the NFC title game before getting blown away—like everybody else—by the Redskins.

Can the Lions do it again? Good question. The '91 season was an emotionally charged year.

Guard Mike Utley was paralyzed two weeks before Thanksgiving in a freak fall against the Rams. As he was being carried off the field, Utley

issued the now-famous "thumbs up" to his teammates, which became their rallying cry as they beat the Rams and wound up winning their final six regular-season games. Erik Kramer, an afterthought at quarterback who stepped in when Rodney Peete tore his Achilles tendon in Week 8, became the season's most improbable hero. And when the Cowboys dared him to throw in the playoffs, Kramer hit an unconscious 29 of 38 for 341 yards and three touchdowns in a 38-6 victory.

This season Wayne Fontes hired Dan Henning to be his offensive coordinator and probably will run a more conventional offense. The Lions may still show some run-and-shoot, but when you have a back like Barry Sanders you build the offense around him. That means having a couple of tight ends on the roster—maybe even a fullback.

CHARTING THE LIONS

Punt return average in '90

Lions (10.3)

NFL average (8.4)

Punt return average in '91

NFL average (8.7)

Lions (14.8)

CHICAGO BEARS

2

NFC Central

The Bears found themselves in a peculiar situation when last season came to a close. They were looking up at another team in the NFC Central. The Bears had won six of the last seven division titles but were beaten out by the rejuvenated Lions. Now Mike Ditka must worry whether this was a one-year dropoff or the first step in a trip south in the standings.

The Bears' 11-5 record certainly was nothing to be ashamed of, but tight early-season victories over the Buccaneers, Giants, and Jets inflated their record. You've got to win those kind of games during the season, but Chicago was far less dominant than its record indicates, and it showed in a first-round playoff loss at home

to Dallas. The Bears pretty much have had the division to themselves since Ditka turned around the program in 1984, but those days are coming to an end. The Lions look like they might be the real thing, and the new

GRADING THE BEARS

(on a 1-10 scale)

Quarterbacks: 5
Running Backs: 9
Receivers: 4
Offensive Line: 5
Defensive Line: 6
Linebackers: 7
Defensive Backs: 6
Special Teams: 8
Intangibles: 7
Coach/Front Office: 7

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

3

NFC Central

No Jerry Burns. No Herschel Walker. No Keith Millard. Nine teams have new coaches this season, but perhaps none have undergone the changes that the Vikings have. Walker was released in late May after Minnesota found no takers in the trade market, Millard was traded to Seattle right before the draft, and Burns retired following last season's 8-8 adventure. The new coach is Dennis Green, a Bill Walsh disciple who also can be a disciplinarian. The Vikings have needed that for several years.

Flashback to the 1987 playoffs. The Vikings blew out the 49ers at Candlestick Park and then probably should have beaten the Redskins in the NFC title game at RFK Stadium. They lost that game, though, then

lost playoff games to the 49ers the next two seasons and didn't make the playoffs the last two years.

Early in the 1989 season then-GM Mike Lynn traded five players and six draft choices in the first two rounds of

coaches in Minnesota, Green Bay, and Tampa Bay eventually will make those teams more competitive.

Meanwhile, the Bears appear to be slipping. Neal Anderson, troubled by injuries, rushed for just 747 yards with a 3.6-yard average. Because the offensive line was having problems and the other running backs weren't picking up the slack, the Bears moved away from the ground-oriented, black-and-blue style of offense that has been their trademark. The results weren't particularly encouraging; their passing offense was just 13th in the league. Jim Harbaugh is a 50-50 quarterback—as many touchdowns as interceptions. Wendell Davis led Chicago with 61 catches last season, but that was only 15th in the NFC.

You get the idea? The Bears are still good but not an elite team anymore. They can be had.

CHARTING THE BEARS

Jim Harbaugh's pass attempts



Bears' points scored



GRADING THE VIKINGS

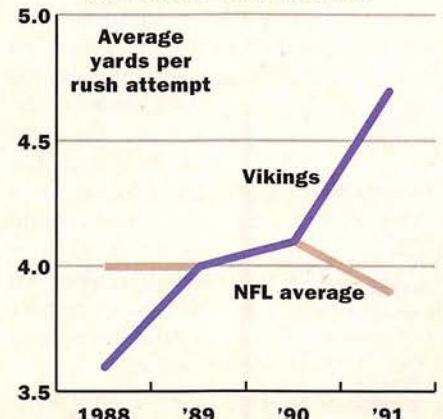
(on a 1-10 scale)

Quarterbacks: 5
Running Backs: 4
Receivers: 6
Offensive Line: 5
Defensive Line: 6
Linebackers: 5
Defensive Backs: 6
Special Teams: 5
Intangibles: 7
Coach/Front Office: 6

the 1990, '91, and '92 drafts to Dallas for Walker, and in his first game Walker rushed for 148 yards. However, that was the highlight of his Vikings career. This year the Vikings signed Roger Craig as a Plan B free agent and will make Terry Allen their primary runner.

Green has a big job ahead of him. The Vikings are not the team they were a few years ago, and there has been a ton of squabbling and infighting. Things figure to change with Green in charge, but whether it will translate into more than eight victories is questionable. The Vikes, however, should have enough to finish third.

CHARTING THE VIKINGS



TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

4

NFC Central

When you think of Sam Wyche, you think of so many things before you mention that he's a pretty good football coach that you tend to overlook his dexterity with the X's and O's. Wyche is a coach for the '90s: He's issue-oriented, he cares for his players, and he always questions things he believes are wrong.

Wyche was a high-profile coach in a low-profile market in Cincinnati—the Bengals would rather save a buck than spend it—but he still managed to get his team to a Super Bowl and develop the skills of quarterback Boomer Esiason. Now he moves to Tampa Bay, where he faces the biggest challenge of his career. He's taking over a team that has lost 10 or more games for

GRADING THE BUCCANEERS

(on a 1-10 scale)

Quarterbacks: 4
Running Backs: 5
Receivers: 5
Offensive Line: 5
Defensive Line: 4
Linebackers: 6
Defensive Backs: 4
Special Teams: 3
Intangibles: 3
Coach/Front Office: 6

nine straight seasons and is led by an underachieving quarterback in Vinny Testaverde. With 96 career interceptions and 63 career touchdown passes, Testaverde is Wyche's biggest project.

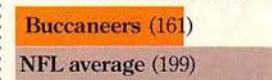
There are other problems, of course. Wyche began his massive task with a handicap because the Ray Perkins regime traded what turned out to be the second pick in this year's draft to the Colts in 1990 for quarterback Chris Chandler. Perk was fired a year after the trade, and Chandler was cut the year after that; meanwhile, a blue-chip defensive player such as Texas A&M's Quentin Coryatt or Pitt's Sean Gilbert would have looked pretty good in a Bucs uniform. Tampa Bay gave up 132 yards a game on the ground last year, second worst in the NFC.

The Buccaneers reached the NFC Championship Game in 1979, but since then this has been a franchise that just can't win. Owner Hugh Culverhouse has tried a lot of different things, and now he's gone for the NFL's rebel coach. We'll see if it works.

CHARTING THE BUCCANEERS

(1991 statistics)

Passing yards per game



Interceptions thrown



GREEN BAY PACKERS

5

Three years ago the Packers were supposed to be a team on the verge.

NFC Central They won 10 games in 1989 with a quarterback named "Majik" and a coach, Lindy Infante, who was being hailed as the next great offensive mind.

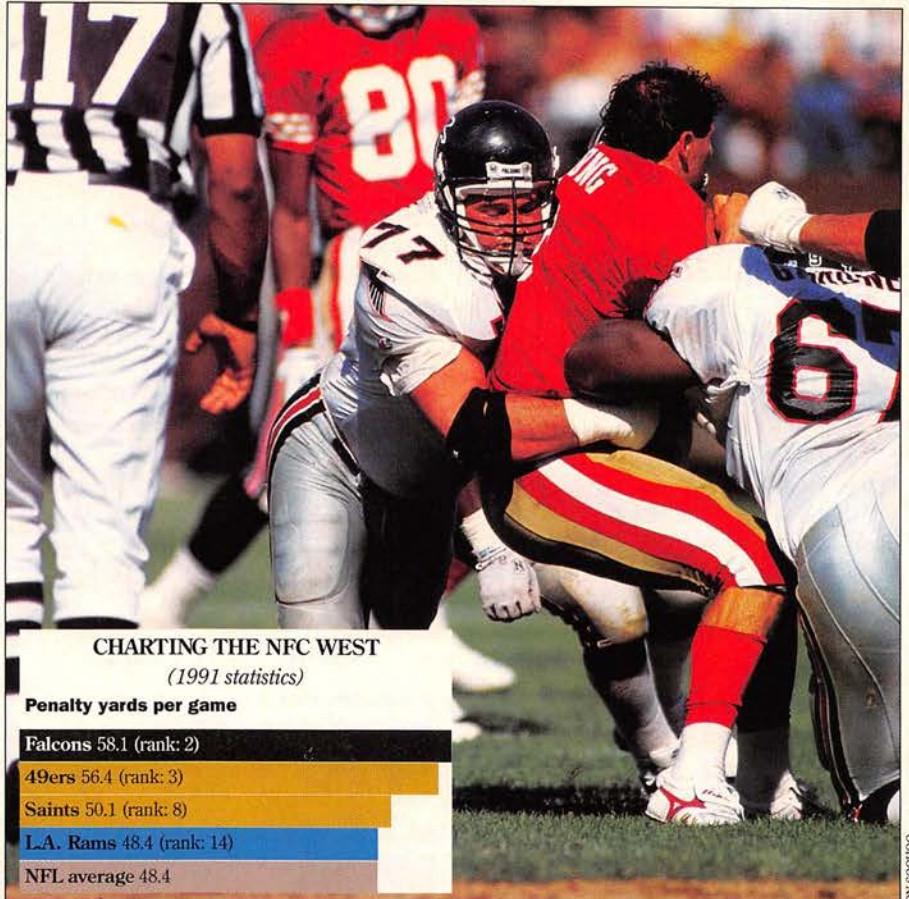
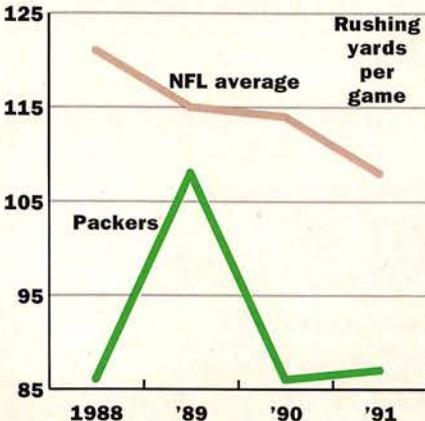
Well, that team turned out to be a fluke. For seemingly the 100th time since the Lombardi era, the Packers are taking the franchise in a new direction. Ron Wolf, a highly respected personnel maven with the Raiders and most recently the Jets, was hired as general manager. He fired Infante and brought in Mike Holmgren, who—guess what?—is considered the next great offensive mind. Holmgren is another graduate of the Bill Walsh school of offense, but the rookie coach has quite a rebuilding job on his hands.

Holmgren must resurrect the career of Don Majkowski, who hasn't done much or even stayed healthy much since 1989. It also will be interesting to see whether Holmgren can incorporate the

Walsh-Montana passing game, which relies so much on precision routes and accurate throws in the cold wintertime weather at Lambeau Field.

Holmgren does not fit the mold of a grind-it-out NFC Central division coach, but this no longer is "the black-and-blue division," and his success with the 49ers is a great credential. In any event, the Packers must develop a running game and do better than the 17 points a game they averaged last season. Otherwise, Holmgren might be wondering why he left the Bay Area for the frozen tundra, and Wolf may be wondering if becoming a GM was really worth the aggravation.

CHARTING THE PACKERS



JON SOOHO

Jerry's kids sometimes crossed the line from defense to virtual decapitation.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

1

The 49ers were 10-6 in 1988 and won the Super Bowl. They were 10-6 last season and didn't make the playoffs. It was a bizarre year by the Bay, to say the least.

Joe Montana needed surgery to repair his right elbow and missed the entire season. Enter Steve Young. All you heard over the years was how Young could start and win for almost any team in the league, but when he got his chance with the Niners he led them to a 4-5 record before injuring his knee and sitting until midway through the final game of the season. By that time, Steve Bono, of all people, had taken the Niners on a five-game winning streak before he was hurt in that last game. Yet Young finished the season ranked as the

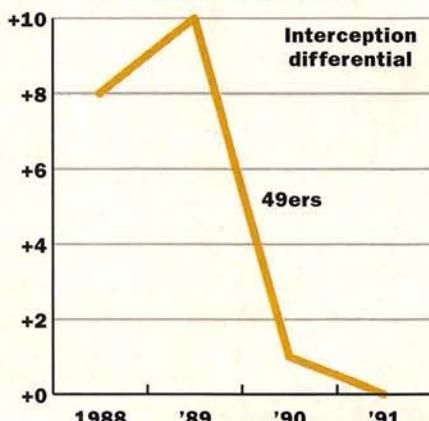
No. 1 passer in the NFC, and Bono was No. 3. Who could have imagined that the 49ers would have two quarterbacks ranked so high—and neither would be named Montana?

The offense actually looked better

when Bono was running it. That's why the 49ers spent much of their time before the draft unsuccessfully trying to trade Young. Montana apparently is fully recovered (although after a May minicamp he needed follow-up surgery to loosen adhesions in his elbow), so what the 49ers have now is a full-blown quarterback controversy.

Having three talented quarterbacks is not a bad problem for coach George Seifert to have. If the 49ers can win 10 games without Montana they should be able to win 11 or 12 with him. They still have a problem with the running game, but a healthy Montana makes up for it.

CHARTING THE 49ERS



ATLANTA FALCONS

2

NFC West It could not have been a comfortable summer for the Falcons front office. Half of the team's starting secondary was off starting in National League outfields—and half of that duo decided to stay there.

Deion Sanders may be the Falcons' best player, but through the first half of the baseball season he may have been the Atlanta Braves' best player, too. Sanders was hitting better than .300 leading off and playing center field. Safety Brian Jordan was a first-week call-up by the St. Louis Cardinals after they were ravaged by injuries and at one point led the team in home runs. Then in mid-June he stunned the Falcons by signing a three-year, \$2.3-million contract with the Cardinals—a deal

that brought an end to his pro football career.

The timing of the move couldn't have been worse for the Falcons because Jordan really came on last season. He was named a Pro Bowl alternate after making 145 tackles

GRADING THE FALCONS (on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	6
Running Backs:	4
Receivers:	9
Offensive Line:	7
Defensive Line:	5
Linebackers:	4
Defensive Backs:	6
Special Teams:	6
Intangibles:	8
Coach/Front Office:	7

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

NFC West It never really developed the catchy nickname like the Fearsome Foursome or the Big Blue Wrecking Crew or the Purple People Eaters, but just try to find a defense more dominant than the Saints' early last season.

Consider what happened after the Chiefs scored a touchdown on the Saints in the fourth quarter of the second game of the season: The Rams' only touchdown came on an interception return; the Vikings, who had only one snap in Saints territory, were shut out; the Falcons' only score came on a fumble return; the Eagles managed only two field goals. The no-touchdown run by the defense lasted 14 quarters.

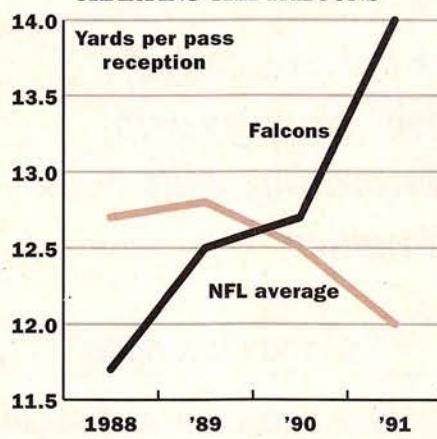
The Saints won their first-ever NFC West title, but any chance they have of

repeating will likely be predicated on the defense. New Orleans hasn't had much firepower on offense, and as a result coach Jim Mora kept things extremely conservative and relied on the defense to win games. When the

with two interceptions and four sacks. Sanders, meanwhile, had 49 tackles, tied Tim McTyer for the team lead with six interceptions, had 14 passes defensed, started in the Pro Bowl for the first time, and even played some wideout, but he, too, is in line to make the big dollars in baseball sooner than football, which could mean he soon will be following Jordan's lead.

That leaves the Falcons waiting for the other shoe to drop. The prospect of this scenario was one reason they tried, although with no luck, to move up in the draft to get cornerback Terrell Buckley, Sanders' successor at Florida State.

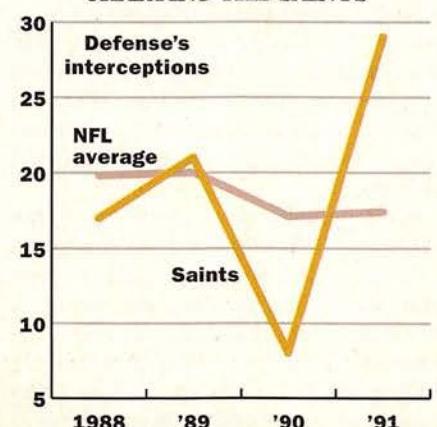
CHARTING THE FALCONS



defense got beaten up at the end of the year the Saints barely hung on to beat out Atlanta. Then, they lost to the Falcons in the first round to drop their all-time playoff record to 0-3.

The Saints made two very smart offseason moves. When the Lions signed defensive MVP Pat Swilling to a three-year offer sheet at \$1.8 million a year, the Saints matched it rather than taking the two No. 1 picks as compensation. Then they lucked out when Indiana running back Vaughn Dunbar slipped down to the No. 21 spot in the draft. He was considered a top 10 talent and should help Mora juice up the offense.

CHARTING THE SAINTS



LOS ANGELES RAMS

4

NFC West The theme with the Colts and Rams are old faces in old places, sort of. When Ted Marchibroda last coached the Colts they were in Baltimore, and when Chuck Knox left the Rams in 1977 they were playing at the Los Angeles Coliseum. At least the Rams are in the same state, if not the same county. Can the second time be the charm for the Rams and Knox? He coached them from 1973 to '77 and left with a pretty fair record of 57-20-1. However, he couldn't get L.A. into a Super Bowl—Knox has never been to the Super Bowl as a head coach.

Knox's teams have always been known for their grind-it-out style—hence the tag "Ground Chuck" in Seattle—but the problem in L.A. is he doesn't have the go-to guy

GRADING THE RAMS (on a 1-10 scale)	
Quarterbacks:	5
Running Backs:	4
Receivers:	5
Offensive Line:	6
Defensive Line:	5
Linebackers:	4
Defensive Backs:	5
Special Teams:	5
Intangibles:	4
Coach/Front Office:	6

on the ground. There's no Curt Warner, and though Eric Dickerson is back in town, he's a little further north. Knox will discover what former coach John Robinson found out late in his tenure: You must throw, because the Rams haven't been able to run (27th in the league last season).

Knox has a couple of complementary runners in Robert Delpino and Cleveland Gary, but he probably will have to rely on quarterback Jim Everett and wide receivers such as Henry Ellard and Flipper Anderson to get the Rams offense into the endzone. That certainly was not the easiest thing to do last year. Talk about a nosedive: Everett, who once had the look of the next Dan Marino, had 11 touchdowns and 20 interceptions last year. Amazingly, the guy who led the NFL in touchdown tosses from 1988 to '89 didn't throw his first one until Game 6. If Knox can solve the Everett mystery the Rams have a shot at winning six or seven games, but in a division that suddenly has become very tough, this could be a long year for a new/old coach.

CHARTING THE RAMS

(1991 statistics)

Defense's sacks

Rams (17)

NFL average (35.4)

Yards allowed per pass attempt

NFL average (6.89)

Rams (8.43)

Statistics compiled by Steve Silverman.

'Can I Still Do It?'

Although he's still a player to be respected, Lawrence Taylor can feel the clammy grip of advancing age and deteriorating skills squeezing him tighter and tighter

NFL

'92

Preview

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN his career, Lawrence Taylor was a thoroughly beaten man. The finest outside linebacker ever sat in the sunlit office of New York Giants general manager George Young and said he was going to retire. Right there, in the middle of the season. "I'm having a tough time," Taylor told Young. "It's just not fun anymore."

That was early last November, two days after the Philadelphia Eagles had torched the Giants 30-7 in a prime-time humiliation. The defending Super Bowl champions had fallen to 4-5, and the 32-year-old Taylor, for whom winning is almost everything, wanted out. All the injuries he had accumulated over the years, all the uncalled holding penalties he had suffered in silence, the drudgery of training camp, the increasingly oppressive boredom of practice, the sudden departure of coaches Bill Parcells and Bill Belichick, and the benching of quarterback Phil Simms were driving him over the edge.

Oh, LT played the next week at Phoenix, but the fire and the drive, the almost naive will to try to make every play, was gone. The pilot light was flickering from week to week. Self-doubt ate at him. He had long, philosophical talks with Giants defensive coordinator Al Groh, the man who recruited him at North Carolina. He wondered aloud if he was washed up.

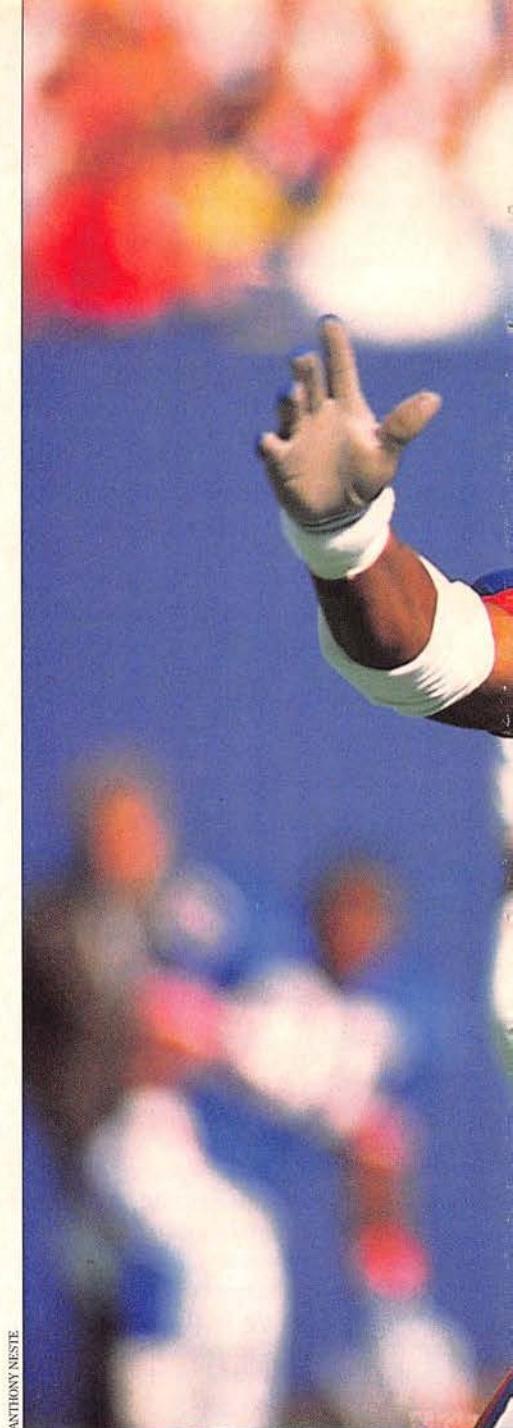
By GREG GARBER

"Everybody says, 'He's not the same man he was five years ago,'" Taylor said one afternoon in the deserted locker room. "Hell, no, I'm not. Who is?"

The man he was five years ago was ruthless, reckless, and indestructible. From his rookie season in 1981 through 1990, Taylor would play in 10 consecutive Pro Bowls, an NFL record. In 1991, though, even his peers recognized the precipitous decline. For the first time, Taylor was not invited to Hawaii. Outwardly he said all the right things and passed it off, but inside he ached.

Taylor grew tired of people referring to him in the past tense. He hated himself for thinking the same way. "As you get older you tend to wonder about injury," says Taylor, now 33. "It's not the physical play that scares you as much as doubting yourself, wondering if you can still do it, wondering if you can make that certain play, get over to the other side. That's the fear I'm faced with when I play football nowadays. Am I getting too old? Can I still do it?"

Finally, Taylor came clean during the offseason. He confirmed publicly what he has been telling friends privately for several years: The 1992 campaign would be his last. "Yeah, this is it," he said. "I'm tired of all the crap. This [1992] is my final year." And if this sounds like a bargaining ploy by another player that has to



ANTHONY NESTE

be pulled from the game kicking and screaming, be advised that LT isn't just another player. "You know something? I think he'll do it," says Simms, the only Giant with a longer tenure. "Lawrence isn't going to embarrass himself."

Two years ago Taylor signed a three-year, \$4.5 million contract and joked, "I'm going to play two more seasons, then slide one more year on my reputation." It will be a glorious slide. Taylor will earn \$1.833 million this year, and though his tackle and sack totals have fallen sharply in recent years he'll earn his pay. LT still draws the respect of opposing offenses; they'll occasionally honor him with two blockers, which more often than not allows someone else to make the play.



Teams no longer are forced to double- and triple-team LT; one lineman can usually handle the once-impossible task.

And that's OK. He's made a few plays of his own.

Since the NFL began keeping sack statistics, Taylor has decked more quarterbacks than anyone. His regular-season total of 131½ outdistances Philadelphia's Reggie White (110) and Chicago's Richard Dent (103½). Entering the 1992 season, Taylor's career total is 140, to go along with 1,083 tackles.

So, with nothing much left to prove, why is LT coming back? There is the money, of course, but there is also the chance for one final winning season, the chance to earn a third Super Bowl cham-

pionship ring before the inevitable three-year rebuilding program begins. Some people look at the tenacious NFC East, football's toughest division, and at the Giants' fluid coaching situation and decaying defense, and see a fourth-place team all over again. Let Taylor dream, though. Let him remember the good times. It's one of the ways he got through last season.

"One of the telltale things I noticed last year were some of the quotes in the newspapers," says Joe Theismann, the former Washington Redskins quarterback, now an analyst for ESPN. "He basically came to the conclusion that there were 10 other

guys on the field he could rely on to get the job done. The LT I knew in the early days didn't need 10 other guys to help him. A lot of the time he did it by himself. That was the first sign I saw of mental quit."

Taylor acknowledges this. Last year he admitted his days of renegade football were over. Now he says: "I try to instill greatness or hustle in my teammates and bring out their ability. I try to live through them, so to speak."

"As I've gotten older and played in, Lord, I don't know how many games, I've learned some things. In any game there are four, five, six areas where the game is

won or lost, where the play has to be made to turn the tide. It's up to me as a more experienced player to try to identify those plays and make them."

It's called maturity, and in the case of Lawrence Taylor, better late than never. Finally, the message from the body to brain has been received. The unnatural strain on his ligaments has left Taylor injured in each of the last five years. He sprained an ankle in a 1991 preseason game, tore up his thumb against Dallas, then the knee went against Tampa Bay. Taylor had missed just one game because of injury in 10 seasons; last year he sat out two of the last four. Increasingly aware of LT's mortality, the Giants are

linebacker in the game anymore, but they say he's still in the top 20. LT says: "I would like to do this: get a list of every linebacker in the league, put them in age groups, rank them from best to last, and just let me know where I fit in. I know I'm not fitting in the last bunch. I know damn well."

Le almost didn't become a linebacker at all. The coaches at North Carolina liked his strength so much they made him a 6'3", 230-pound nose tackle. It wasn't until his sophomore year that LT was shifted to linebacker to better exploit his speed. By the time he was a 240-pound senior, Taylor was virtually unstoppable. He made 69 tackles that season, and an incredible 38 were behind the line of scrimmage, 16 of them sacks.

The New Orleans Saints made Heisman Trophy winner George Rogers, the South Carolina running back, the first overall pick, but the Giants wanted Taylor all along. The team hadn't been to the playoffs for 18 years when he arrived at the New Jersey Meadowlands in 1981. Was it a coincidence that they earned a postseason berth in his rookie season?

"No, not the way he played," Theismann says. "We went up to play them his first year and I remember this one play, a third and four or five on their 15-yard-line. He's playing right outside linebacker, and he's just bouncing around all over the place. Well, I ran a bootleg, and I saw him go out of my field of vision, chasing the running back the other way. He's 15 yards out of the play, and it's not like I'm real fast or anything, but I've kind of mentally eliminated him—and all of a sudden, I get ear-holed by this guy. I mean, he just nailed me. That pursuit, in my mind, was his trademark."

That first season, teams tried to block Taylor with an offensive tackle. When it quickly became apparent that one man was no match for Taylor, teams tried to knock him off-stride with a running back or a tight end. Later he routinely would see three men in his path to the quarterback.

Off the field, Taylor was a wild success, with emphasis on the "wild." He ran with the fast crowd. "When he got into the league, his pleasure centers were for fast cars, money, women, and drinking," says Reece, now a sports anchor in Hartford. "Eventually it was drugs. He was living in a dangerous way, on and off the field. The passion for relentless, violent hustle was both good and bad."

In the early days you could see both sides at the Giants training camp in Pleasantville, N.Y. During a break in the

afternoon practice, there was Taylor heaving these magnificent spirals more than 50 yards across the field toward a square yellow trash bucket. One, two, three in a row dropped into the goal. The veterans just shook their heads. Later, Taylor could stay ahead of everyone in the town's taverns. One night he chugged a pitcher of mixed drinks, stood on a bar stool, dived six feet onto the floor, and landed in a handstand. After a scary silence, the patrons burst into applause.

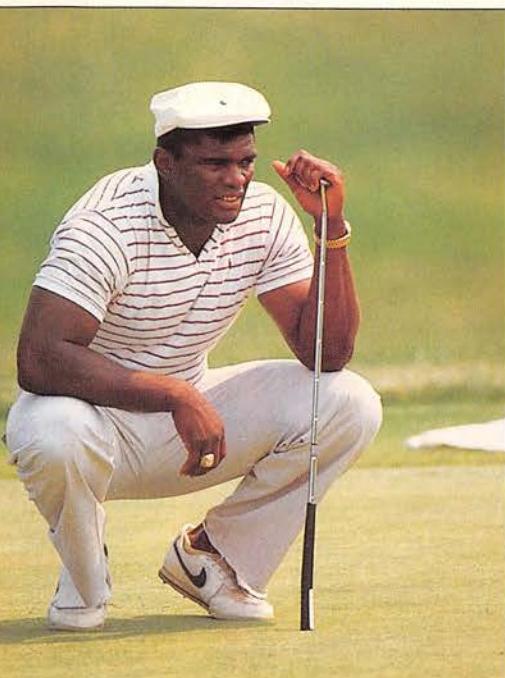
Lifting weights was an option he never considered. Once Taylor made a surprise visit to Giants Stadium for an offseason workout. Strength coach Johnny Parker ran a handful of Giants through grueling 330-yard sprints, and afterward, bent over with their hands on their knees, the players tried to catch their breath. "You know, coach," gasped Taylor to Parker. "I always wanted to train like this, but I just never could make myself."

How much better could Taylor have been if he had taken conditioning seriously? Parker winces. "If the sun got 1% hotter it would burn up the earth," Parker says. "If LT was 1% better, who knows? Instead of giving up at certain times, it would be easier to gear up for a higher level. It's easier when you don't have to reach as far. Sometimes he comes in [the weight room], but he's got to do it in a cool way, where he's not compromising his role, his scene. He's a little bit of a prisoner of that, isn't he?"

Taylor recorded 11½ sacks in 1984 and 13½ more in 1985, one of them a monstrous, leg-shattering, career-ending sack of Theismann in a Monday night game. "I asked him a few years ago if the accident changed him," Theismann says. "He said it did. He said it broke my leg, but it was sort of a wakeup call for him, too. That happened in 1985. In 1986 he went into rehab. [That year] he was the league MVP."

True enough. However, even in the midst of his greatest season, when Taylor produced 20½ sacks and the Giants went 17-2 and won Super Bowl XXI, the demon of cocaine dogged him. He wrestled with it for two more years, and though no one knew it at the time, Taylor's career began its descent after 1986. The tackle totals, the only real measurement of pure effort, began to skid. Taylor averaged 106 tackles his first six seasons. Since then, the average figure is 74.

To his credit, Taylor succeeded where the Dexter Manleys of the world failed; he found the will power to stop doing cocaine. "As time goes on," says Simms, "you realize it's a career you're dealing



ANTHONY NESTE

The lion of the links: "You're seeing the civilizing of Lawrence Taylor."

considering making him a part-time player this year, a sort of designated pass-rusher.

Taylor used to be a frisky presence in Wednesday practices. The hairy old veterans, George Martin and Harry Carson, used to tell him to save it for the game. Now, the game is the only thing he has energy for. In truth, Taylor feels more comfortable with a nine-iron in his hands than a quarterback's jersey. He actually seems to enjoy encounters with the media. He regularly wears glasses off the field. On the field? "No way," says Beasley Reece, a close friend and former teammate. "He's too proud. But I'm telling you, I don't know how he gets around. I'm telling you, he's blind."

Taylor is brutally honest about himself, but he is not without pride. League personnel men will tell you he's not the best

with here. Lawrence saw the end coming and did something about it." Theismann adds: "Lawrence understands the value of a dollar. If you set a high enough price tag the player will get it. Lawrence realizes that if he does blow one time it'll cost him \$2 million. That's a serious deterrent."

According to some of his defensive teammates, Taylor first lost a step in 1987, when he was 28. In 1990, though, Taylor showed signs of mental fatigue for the first time. Belichick, then the Giants defensive coordinator, was one of those who noticed. "The thing that all of them lose is that toughness, that physically dominant attitude that allows them to knock the crap out of people," says Belichick, now the coach of the Cleveland Browns. "Carson, [tight end Mark] Bavaro, Taylor—they all lost it eventually."

Reece concurs, saying: "You're seeing the beginning of the end. You get to the point where you reach for the accelerator and there's nothing there. It happened to me, and it's happening to LT. Once you admit it psychologically, it makes you accept a new standard."

"On the upside, you are seeing the civilizing of Lawrence Taylor. He is a businessman now. The guy owns more things than you'd believe." In the spring Taylor opened his third restaurant in the New York metropolitan area and held court as he previewed for the media his Lawrence Taylor Golf Center, right down the road from Giants Stadium. Golf is his chief passion. He rarely thinks about the past and his place in the game. That is for others.

Theismann believes there will never be another Lawrence Taylor. "The game won't allow it," he says. "When he came in offensive tackles weighed 275 pounds, and now they're 300 pounds. You have the shotgun offense where the quarterback is deeper in the pocket, and there's the two-tight-end offense. All of these things were created to stop his speed and power. There's no doubt in his mind he's the best linebacker, and under the circumstances, I guess there's no doubt in mine."

Taylor says this: "I feel like I've had a good career as a ballplayer. I've done things in this league that may never be duplicated again. I don't worry about is LT the best or is so-and-so the best, who the next LT is and all that. If any player can put together what I've put together over the years they should be proud of themselves. I'm very proud of myself."

So will LT be as good as his word and walk away after the 1992 season? "Don't bet on it," says Young. "Do guys just walk away from that kind of money?"

Simms says he and Taylor have had a



Older but wiser: 'I can now identify the key situations and make those plays.'

running gag for several years. "We've laughed about it," Simms says. "He says, 'Hey, when you leave, I'm leaving.' And I say, 'Well, get your ass ready.' He's one of the few links I have to the team from years ago. God, there's really no one else left, coaches or players."

"The thing is, he could play more if he wanted to. Listen, it's not his body. It's his mind. He could go three, four more years if he wanted to, but I don't think he wants to. The game isn't as stimulating for him. He's got other options now."

Reece thinks it will come down to how Taylor performs. "If he looks at himself in the film sessions and can't look, he'll walk away. If some fourth-round pick pushes him five yards off the line of scrimmage, a guy who couldn't carry his jock when he was in his prime, he'll walk away."

In the twilight of the 1991 season, Taylor and Groh found themselves talk-

ing one day in the locker room. The team would finish 8-8, and Taylor would watch a couple of the games from the sideline. Groh had seen his college recruit grow into the man who changed football forever. He felt proud.

"You know," he said to Taylor, "in every draft there's a guy classified as the next Lawrence Taylor. Man, the bus stations are full of guys who are supposed to be the next LT. That's ridiculous. There won't be another. Say he's the next Wilber Marshall, but not the next LT."

Taylor smiled and nodded his head. He looked at Groh and said, "You got that right." ■

Sports fans don't make comparisons to "the next GREG GARBER," either—mainly because the real thing is still going strong. Greg contributed to our coverage of Super Bowl XXVI.

Cut Down By t

The NFL's elder statesmen battle advancing age with a combination of grit and guile, but time is running out for pro football's Over-the-Hill Gang

By GREG GARBER

NFL

'92

Preview

THE NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION won't want to hear this, but maybe the reason the AFC has lost the last eight Super Bowls is this: too many representatives from the Over-the-Hill Gang. You haven't heard about it? Check it out.

The Los Angeles Raiders, the patron team for aging wayward souls, again lead the league in geezers. Of the 37 players they protected in the Plan B

free agency system, 15 were in their 30s. In fact, six of the top nine teams in that respect came from the AFC, including Denver and Indianapolis (nine each), and Buffalo, Houston, and Kansas City with eight apiece.

What follows is a look at more than a dozen stars who, like New York Giants linebacker Lawrence Taylor, are facing the downside. They've played in more than 50 Pro Bowls altogether, but they average more than 33 years of age and 11 NFL seasons apiece.

Appropriately enough, the wheezing Raiders have two representatives, running back **Marcus Allen** and strong safety **Ronnie Lott**. Allen, now 32, clearly has fallen off from his glory years as the mainstay of the Raiders.



the Clock

The last time he led the league in rushing was 1985, when he rolled up 1,759 yards, a figure that makes his 1991 season pale by comparison. After straining knee ligaments in the opener at Houston and missing eight weeks, Allen split time with Roger Craig and rookie Nick Bell and finished with a paltry 287 yards rushing. Sadly, with the heralded arrival of Eric Dickerson from Indianapolis, Allen's playing time will be reduced even further, and he'll never again be anything more than a role player.

When the San Francisco 49ers dismantled their dynasty by sending Lott and Roger Craig to the Raiders, most NFL observers thought the two were all done. However, Lott shocked everyone but Al Davis with a terrific season. The Raiders moved him from free safety to strong safety to compensate for his declining speed, but Lott, now 33, managed an NFL-best eight interceptions and played almost every down of 17 games. It's impossible to imagine a similar year in '92, though. Part of what drove Lott last season was the passionate desire to prove the 49ers wrong. That will be missing this year, along with Lott's consistent, high-impact game.

He's probably the best offensive tackle to ever play the game, but there was **Anthony Munoz** pushing himself through an offseason four-mile run and wondering what the future held. "I'm getting old," he said after the run. "I don't know how they see me. I think I'd like to play another year." His wife, DeDe, who would like to see him playing golf at the age of 60, wishes he had retired two years ago. As it is, Munoz, who will be 34 this season, has been selected to play in 11 consecutive Pro Bowls. He's not the

best tackle in the game now—there probably are a dozen ahead of him—but he's adequate. A dislocated elbow against the Giants caused him to miss the first significant time of this career, and his

durability is a question. However, only he will decide when he's had enough.

For nine seasons **Richard Dent** has been the classic defensive end. He was a lowly eighth-round choice by the Chicago Bears in 1983 (he was too scrawny for most scouts), but he blossomed into a 6'5", 265-pound menace to quarterbacks. With 10½ sacks in 1991, Dent pushed his career total to 104, a total surpassed only by Taylor and Reggie White. Dent will turn 32 this season, though, and the burst of speed that earned him the MVP award at Super Bowl XX has diminished. Most of the crew that thrashed the New England Patriots 46-10 is gone, and in a few years Dent will join them. He still has the guile to finesse his way around young offensive linemen, but this is the season when even that advantage will be nullified.

At age 38, and now in his second stint with the Buccaneers, **Steve DeBerg** probably has lost any chance of ever playing in a Super Bowl. He went 26-14 in his last 40 regular-season starts with Kansas City, but he was ineffective during much of the second half of the '91 season. The Chiefs' signing of ex-Seahawks quarterback (and longtime nemesis) Dave Krieg meant DeBerg's services were no longer needed in K.C. In Tampa, DeBerg will be in an all-too-familiar role: playing understudy to a "franchise" quarterback. He played two years in San Francisco, then the 49ers drafted Joe Montana; he played three years in Denver before the Broncos drafted John Elway. Now, in Tampa, he'll try to lend help to Vinny Testaverde until new coach Sam Wyche gives the wily veteran a call.

At 36, Cleveland Browns outside linebacker **Clay Matthews** soon will be collecting pension benefits. OK, we admit he's a physical marvel, but his effectiveness has been on the wane for several years. His career high for sacks, 12, came in 1984, and in the last three years the totals have been 4, 3½, and 6½. Matthews experienced a renaissance of sorts under rookie coach Bill Belichick in 1991, but this is the year his heart finally will realize his legs have had it.

Minnesota Vikings wide receiver **Anthony Carter**, who will turn 32 this season, has become nothing more than an elegant possession receiver. Sure, he caught 51 balls last season—but for a mere total of 553 yards, an average of 10.8 per catch. That hardly compares to a career average

well over 17 entering '92. Vikings teammate **Joey Browner**, the silky safety, managed to pick off five passes last year, but personnel men wonder if he's got anything left for 1992. The decline of Carter and Browner marks the passing of the time when the Vikings had one of the league's most talented rosters.

The Broncos' **Karl Mecklenburg**, previously a defensive end and an outside linebacker, is now an inside linebacker, where his declining foot speed isn't as much of a liability. Mecklenburg, who soon will turn 32, gets the majority of his sacks (nine in 1991) on stunts now, rather than on bursts around the tackles.

Three years ago Giants center **Bart Oates** figured his starting career was over. "Oh, I expect Brian Williams will be the starter," he said. "When they draft a guy in the first round, they usually want to see him play." Somehow, though, Oates, an undersized 270 pounds, has held off Williams each of the last three years and made two Pro Bowls in the process. However, this will be the season that Williams finally pushes Oates into his second career, practicing law.

Atlanta Falcons wide receiver **Drew Hill** seemed to hit the wall after five games last year; he had only 15 catches, and critics figured his 35 years finally had caught up with him. Then the Oilers made him a full-time player, and Hill finished with 90 catches for 1,109 yards, the fifth time he's cleared 1,000 yards—and probably the last. Despite the faith the Falcons displayed by signing him to a lucrative Plan B deal, Hill has slowed down appreciably, and the concentration lapses he showed last year will cost him more dropped balls.

Rickey Jackson, the New Orleans Saints linebacker, had 11½ sacks last year and now has 97 for his 11-year career—but remember, last season was a contract drive for Jackson. He'll get a new deal, then play a few more respectable seasons before retiring.

Center **Jeff Bostic** is like a lot of his Washington Redskins teammates. He has been effective for years (13 now, to be precise), but he's getting a little long in the tooth (34 this season). His decline is one of the reasons the Redskins won't repeat as Super Bowl champions.

Andre Tippett aches, and he's just sitting in a chair. "Man, my shoulder's killing me, my legs hurt, and I have to get my toes specially taped just to practice, let alone play games." The New England Patriots outside linebacker made the Pro Bowl five straight times from 1984 to '88, but never again. He's still serviceable, but he's clearly on the downside. ■

New Year, Same Story

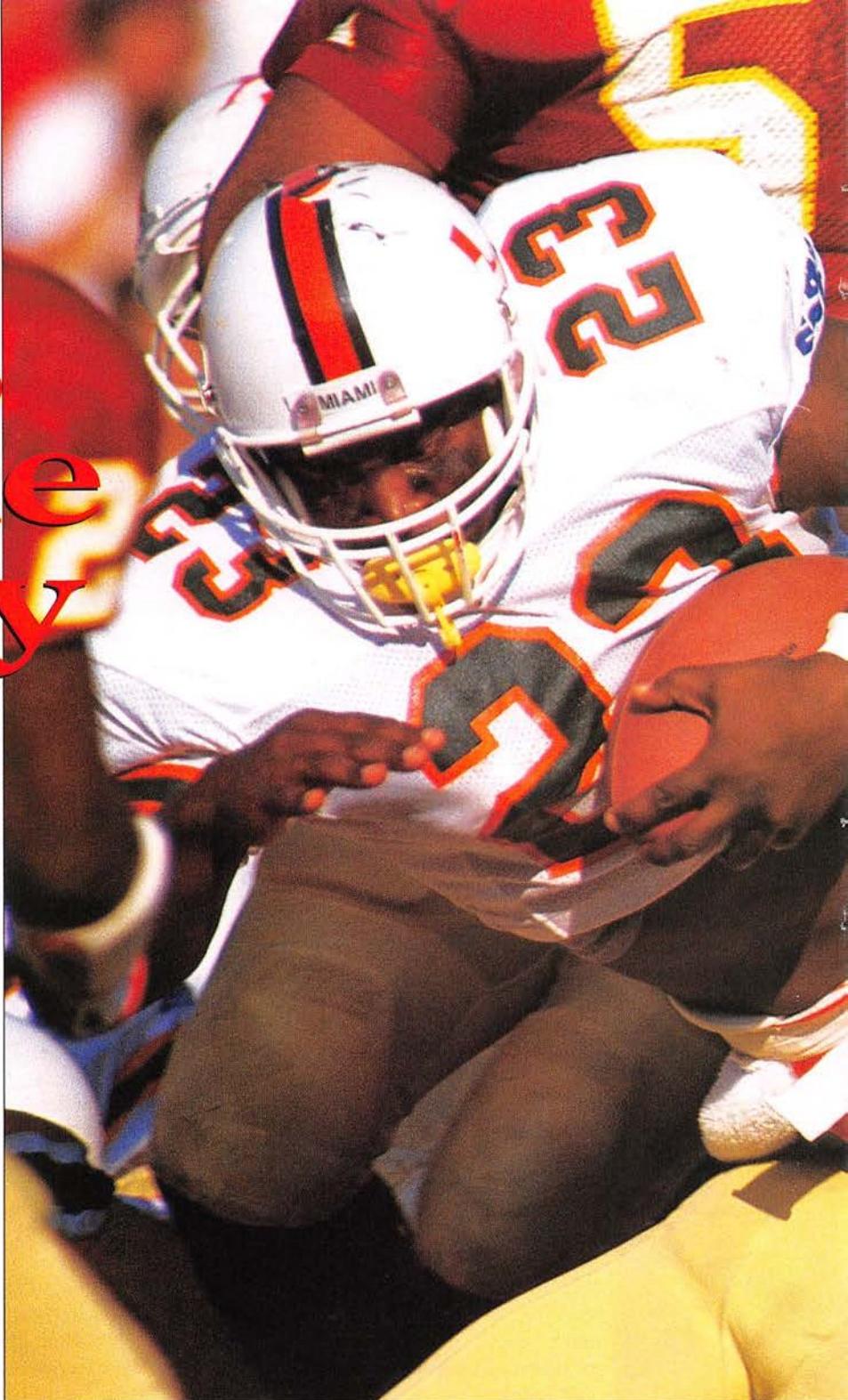
Florida State joins reigning co-champions Washington and Miami in a class of their own among the elite teams

By ALLEN BARRA

**College
'92
Preview**

WE'RE SORRY WE CAN'T offer you any surprises in our selection of No. 1 possibilities; we'll try to make up for that later on. For the time being, all we can say is that the three teams that dominated the race for No. 1 all season last year seem so far ahead of all the others in front-line talent, depth, and soundness of program that only some quirks of scheduling can prevent one—or who knows, two—from being No. 1 after New Year's Day '93.

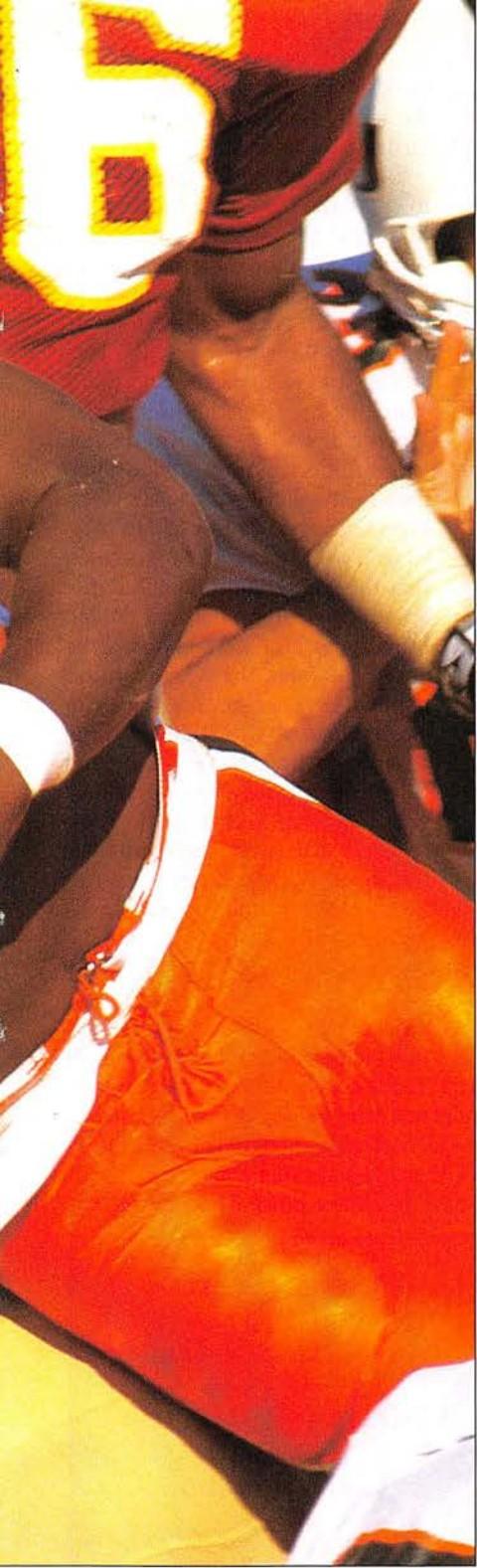
Washington is the defending co-champ, and rightfully so: All the major power ratings indicated that the Huskies played the toughest regular-season schedule, and in their bowl game they beat a much more impressive foe in Michigan than Miami did in Nebraska. What reasons are there for assuming Washington can't repeat? The Huskies have two superb quarterbacks in Mark Brunell and Billy Joe Hobert and a Heisman-candidate runner in Beno Bryant, so the best scoring team in college football—the Huskies averaged 41.9 points a game against a



Blow 'em away: Larry Jones and the Hurricanes have FSU in their sights.

No. 1	Washington
No. 2	Miami
No. 3	Florida State

schedule that would have made NCAA points leader Fresno State (44.2) wish it had scheduled more games with New Mexico—should continue to be the best. Mario Bailey is gone, but wide receiver is the easiest position to restock. Defensive lineman Steve Emtman will not be so easy to replace—according to coach Don James, Emtman “impacted everyone around him,” which made him sound like a tooth—but the truth is that the Huskies could lose some steam on defense and still be one of the five or six best teams in the country. This year's schedule should be easier; out of confer-



IM GUNDALL/SI

ence they get Nebraska, a mediocre Wisconsin, and a bad Pacific, all at home

Scheduling could be the main reason **Miami's** chances aren't as good as last year's—which simply means the Hurricanes could lose a game this season. Maybe two: Iowa was 10-1-1 last year, and the Canes open on the Hawkeyes' home turf. Taking on arch-rival Florida State and always-tough Penn State (at University Park) back-to-back increases the possibility that the Hurricanes will lose one of those games, and if they suffer a lapse in concentration, Syracuse (10-2), San Diego State (8-4-1), or even Pat Sullivan's revitalized TCU crew (7-4) could be troublesome. There isn't the slightest reason to question Miami's talent, but there are indications that the classroom might be turning into a real distraction for the football team: 17 seniors from the last two teams either have graduated or are about to. Hey, guys—let's get our priorities in order.

Florida State's priority this year will be to beat the Hurricanes—a national

title would be nice, but the great white whale this year is Miami. Besides, if the Seminoles get the first they'll probably get the second. The schedule should be a bit easier this year—only four teams have a real shot at beating FSU—and the defense should be one of the three or four best in the country. Amp Lee shouldn't be missed at all: His sub, Sean Jackson, was the MVP in the Cotton Bowl. The only big if is junior Charlie Ward, the point guard on the Seminoles basketball team, who is talented but largely untested at quarterback.

Texas A&M is on the verge of bringing big-time respectability back to the Southwest Conference—the Aggies have won four of the last seven titles and should easily outdistance Texas for the

Cotton Bowl bid this year. (That may be where any national title hopes end, no matter what happens, because the Cotton Bowl simply isn't attracting top contenders like it used to.) A&M has to replace several key players, including quarterback Bucky Richardson, but it has a pool of more than 60 returning sophomores and freshmen, redshirt and "true," to choose from. The best news is that the game the Aggies probably stand the best chance of losing, Stanford, is on opening day. Pollsters have bad memories at the end of the year for what happened in the first week or two.

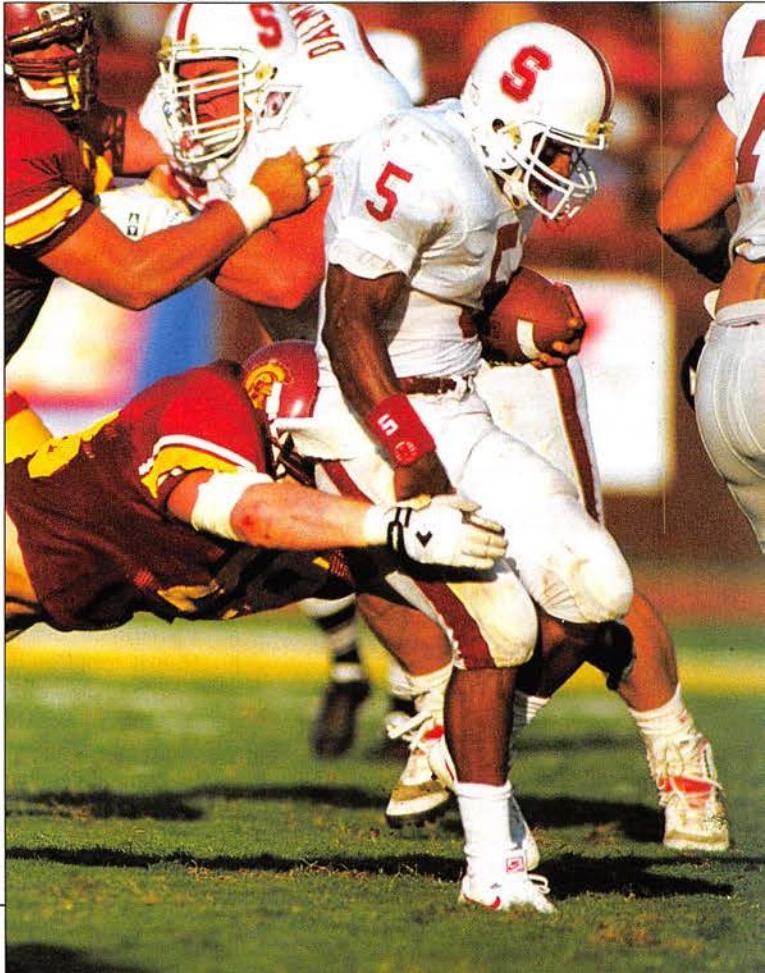
Last year **Alabama** dodged more bullets than Mel Gibson in a

No. 4
Texas A&M
No. 5
Alabama
No. 6
Stanford

"Lethal Weapon" movie. This year it looks as if the Crimson Tide might not have as many bullets fired their way—Georgia and Florida, the only teams Bama lost to last year, aren't on the schedule; Auburn is scheduled for Birmingham; and Tennessee is looking for a new quarterback. Plus, the Tide have a few more bullets to fire back: quarterback Jay Barker, who threw three touchdown passes in the Blockbuster Bowl against Colorado, will get a chance to show his stuff all season long, and flanker-running back-scatback-punt returner-wing-back-slotback (and sometime quarterback) David Palmer should emerge as one of the most exciting players in the nation. The defense should give up no more than, say, 13 points a game, which means Alabama has its best bet for an unbeaten season since Bear Bryant's last national championship team in 1979.

Stanford is our big surprise so far; finishing in the top six seems like a stretch for a school with nothing but a bunch of college students to send against a schedule that includes Texas

Milburn will help the Cardinal pull away in the Pac-10.



JON SOOHO



could be making a Heisman run as the, oh, 9-1 Gators go into the season finale with Florida State.

Somebody from the Big Ten has to crack the top 10, go to the Rose Bowl, and get sacked by the Pac-10 champ, so it might as well be **Michigan**. (Sorry, Big Ten fans, but on the big playing field of life your teams are the Democrats, the Pac-10's are the Republicans, and every year is a presidential race.) The Wolverines will miss linebacker Erick Anderson more than they'll miss Desmond Howard; quarterback Elvis Grbac had 24 touchdown passes (and you can expect him to match that this year), and tailback Ricky Powers rushed for 1,187 yards and could approach 1,500 this year.

Did you know that **Clemson** has the third-best won-lost percentage in college football over the last three seasons (behind Florida State and Miami)? That may extend to four seasons with a relatively weak schedule that gives the Tigers their toughest game (against the Seminoles) at home. The Tigers

BRUCE SCHWARTZMAN

A relatively easy schedule should give the Orangemen a good shot at their goal.

A&M, Notre Dame, Washington, and Cal. It's not that we think Bill Walsh is the Second Coming (or Third Coming, as it were, since Walsh went to the 49ers from Stanford). Sure, he's a great coach—Walsh may be the most innovative pro coach of the post-Lombardi era—but Stanford was already moving along before it got Walsh back. The Cardinal were 8-4 last year and should have gone 9-3 except for an embarrassing bowl-game loss to Georgia Tech. Ten players are back from the improved defensive unit, and quarterback Steve Stenstrom, who threw for 15 touchdowns last year, should emerge as a star after a spring of working with Walsh. Since all-around back Glyn Milburn also returns, Stanford should miss "Touchdown Tommy" Vardell not at all. Don't assume that the Cardinal can't win at least three of those four big games.

Syracuse has a vastly improved quarterback in Marvin Graves, a potential All-America receiver or whatever-back in Qadry Ismail, and an Italian coach—always a big plus in this sport—in Paul Pasqualoni. The Orangemen also have a relatively easy schedule once they get past East Carolina in the opener, and the Pirates aren't as good as that 11-1 record last year indicated. The Orangemen probably will go into the November 21 meeting with Miami no worse than 9-1—and they get Miami at home.

The only reason for not rating **Florida** higher is that it remains to be seen how well a pair of All-Southeastern Conference offensive linemen and another set of all-league defensive linemen can be replaced. Alabama isn't on the regular-season schedule, which could help. We believe Shane Matthews is the nation's best player, and if the rest of the pieces fall into place he

have 10 starters to replace. That seems like a lot, but most of the replacements are experienced seniors.

Penn State has three warm-up games—Cincinnati, Temple, and Eastern Michigan—in which to break in a replacement for quarterback Tony Sacca, and it could well be Tony's brother, John. Tailback Richie Anderson, who gained 800 yards with 10 touchdowns, and wideout O.J. McDuffie should take the heat off the new guy. The Lions get Miami at home this year.

East Carolina quarterback Jeff Blake broke 32 school records last year, which sounds impressive until you realize how many records at East Carolina must have been up for grabs. At any rate, he's gone, along with linebacker Robert Jones (a Butkus finalist) and coach Bill Lewis, the chief architect of the most successful football year in school history. However, coaches are ecstatic over 6'4" sophomore quarterback Michael Anderson, and Syracuse is the only team on the schedule to be truly feared.

Notre Dame, as usual, has one of the meanest schedules in the country—the only break is that the Irish get Michigan, Stanford, BYU, and Penn State at home. Or is that really a break? Over the last couple of seasons Holtz's Irish have had some astonishing lapses on their home field, losing huge leads to Stanford, Penn State, and the shocking 35-34 loss to Tennessee last year. Holtz's teams have problems with big leads, period; Notre Dame also gave up 42 points to Hawaii. Is Holtz phoning in his second-half game plan? The Irish have 10 players returning on defense, but it

No. 7	Syracuse
No. 8	Florida
No. 9	Michigan
No. 10	Clemson

ence offensive linemen and another set of all-league defensive linemen can be replaced. Alabama isn't on the regular-season schedule, which could help. We believe Shane Matthews is the nation's best player, and if the rest of the pieces fall into place he

No. 11	Penn State
No. 12	East Carolina
No. 13	Notre Dame
No. 14	Colorado
No. 15	UCLA

remains to be seen if that's a plus or a minus. Quarterback Rick Mirer and running back Jerome Bettis will battle it out for Notre Dame's desultory Heisman candidacy.

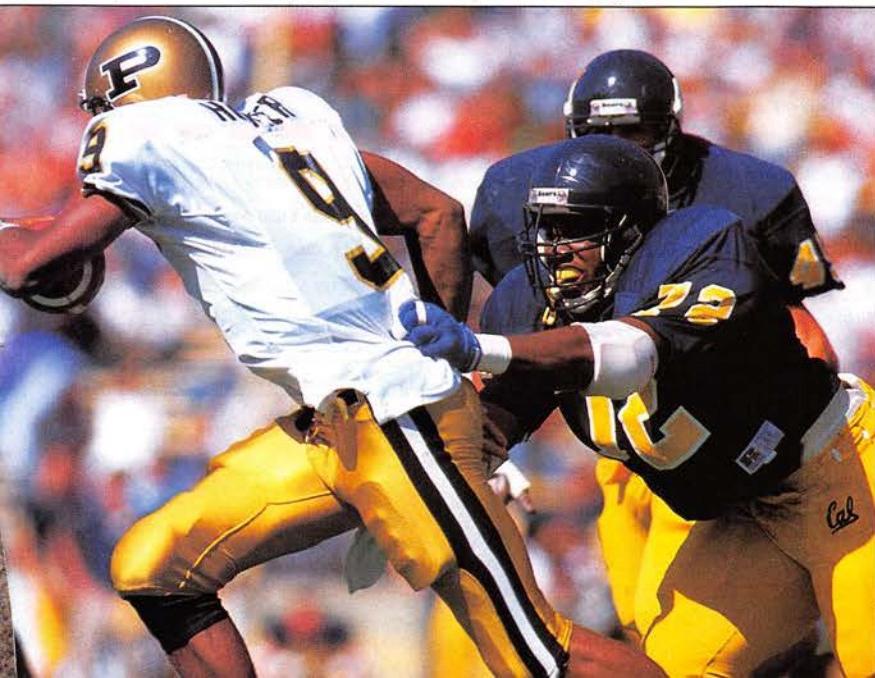
Colorado finally seems to have gained ascendancy over Nebraska and Oklahoma in the Big Eight—if the formerly Big Two couldn't overtake the Buffaloes last year in a rebuilding season (Colorado lost 24 seniors after the '90 championship season), they're not likely to catch them at all. This year the Buffaloes lost Darian Hagan, one of the great all-around quarterbacks in school history, but Vance Joseph looks to be a fine drop-back passer, the schedule is weaker, the team is stronger, and a 9-2 regular season looks likely.

UCLA went 9-3 and seemed on the brink of moving toward a possible national title when quarterback Tommy Maddox opted for the NFL draft. The rest of the team, particularly running back Kevin Williams and wide receiver Sean LaChapelle (68 catches for 11 touchdowns) is set, so a 9-2 season is possible if coach Terry Donahue can find a suitable quarterback in Ryan Fein or Wayne Cook. California and Stanford would seem to be the only teams on the schedule that might be favored against the Bruins, but watch out for USC, which was much better than its 3-8 record.

Mississippi State was the SEC darkhorse (or dog) last year, and things would have looked a heckuva lot better if not for a humiliating and completely unexpected loss to Air Force in the Liberty Bowl. With 18 of 22 starters back, an 8-3 record or better might be likely. Jackie Sherrill has two good situation quarterbacks: Bill (Sleepy) Robinson, a good passer and great runner, and Greg Plump, who can play catch-up (though with a name like Plump he might seem better suited at *wide receiver*).

No. 16	Mississippi State
No. 17	Tennessee
No. 18	Iowa
No. 19	Ohio State
No. 20	Nebraska

Despite a new look, it won't be easy to run away from California.



average), and so many good wideout prospects that Carl Pickens may not be missed.

Adding Miami and Colorado to the schedule won't help **Iowa** reach 10-1-1 again; neither will the departure of quarterback Matt Rodgers. However, the defense is solid, and receiver Danan Hughes (nearly 19 yards a catch) might be the Big Ten's most legitimate game-breaking threat. (And if a baseball game breaks out, he could be a big help—he hit .360 last year.)

Ohio State might have the best combination of defense and a rushing game (now that much-publicized medical student Robert Smith is back) that coach John Cooper has had in Columbus. In fact, a solid passing attack might vault the Buckeyes into contention to get clobbered by the Pac-10 champ on New Year's Day.

Whether Nebraska or Oklahoma has a shot at breaking out of the second-tier group and into the first depends on who wins when they play each other—as usual, their schedules aren't very demanding. (Nebraska finishes the season, according to its media guide, vs. "Kansas State at Tokyo"—a hell of a place for KSU to put an extension center, if you ask us.) The Cornhuskers have a monster offensive line and little experience at quarterback, so you know this team probably will have the same strengths and weaknesses as recent Nebraska teams. Stung by NCAA probations two years ago, the Sooners had the guts to go with something new in a drop-back passing attack, but the effects of the probation on recruiting are now starting to kick in. The winner on November 21 will likely finish the year at 10-2, the loser 9-3.

The Hurricanes vs. the Golden Hurricane on New Year's Day? Nah, but it's a thought. **Tulsa**, under the guidance of genius-in-progress Dave Rader, went 10-2 last year and has 13 starters and 45 lettermen returning. We really didn't think the Golden Hurricane were that good last year—but then, neither did Texas A&M, a 35-34 loser to Tulsa.

Whether **San Diego State** continues its assault on Brigham Young's Western Athletic Conference hegemony depends on who wins the September 10 match at Provo. Last year the score was 52-52; this year, the first team to crack 60 wins. We'll flip a coin and go with the Aztecs. With all due respect to both of these worthies, we don't expect them to show outside their leagues.

California was 10-2 last year, and while there's no reason why the Golden Bears shouldn't continue to win, a new quarterback, a new coach, and an almost new offensive line could add another loss or two. One of those could be **USC**. The Trojans return several key players, all bent on revenge against Cal (who outscored USC 52-30) and Washington, Stanford, UCLA, and Notre Dame, to whom they lost four games by a total of 21 points. ■

Senior writer ALLEN BARRE says Northwestern is only a couple of players away from cracking the top 10—the top of the Big Ten, that is. Allen profiled baseball's meanest pitchers in June.

No. 21
Oklahoma

No. 22
Tulsa

No. 23
San Diego State

No. 24
California

No. 25
USC



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- 7598 Vince Coleman
- 7574 Ryne Sandberg
- 7595 Andre Dawson
- 7508 Mark Grace
- 7504 Jerome Walton
- 7552 Kirk Gibson
- 7512 Orel Hershiser
- 7592 Will Clark
- 7533 Kevin Mitchell
- 7516 Ken Griffey, Jr.
- 7575 Dwight Gooden
- 7564 Darryl Strawberry
- 7520 Greg Jefferies
- 7550 Kevin Elster
- 7503 Bobby Bonilla
- 7513 Andy Van Slyke
- 7590 Eric Davis
- 7500 Chris Sabo
- 7534 Barry Larkin
- 7583 Roger Clemens
- 7528 Wade Boggs
- 7515 Mike Greenwell
- 7522 George Brett
- 7530 Tom Gordon
- 7519 Bo Jackson
- 7587 Kirby Puckett
- 7579 Don Mattingly
- 7462 Lakers Montage
- 7467 Pistons Montage
- 7463 Bulls Montage
- 7481 Paul Pressey
- 7453 Michael Jordan
- 7454 Michael Jordan
- 7461 Michael Jordan
- 7465 Michael Jordan
- 7484 Michael Jordan
- 7485 Scottie Pippen
- 7482 Mark Price
- 7433 Larry Bird
- 7460 Kevin McHale
- 7447 Dominique Wilkins
- 7456 Spud Webb
- 7475 Doc Rivers
- 7477 Kelly Tripucka

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- 7488 J.R. Reid
- 7472 John Stockton
- 7469 Karl Malone
- 7449 Danny Ainge
- 7403 Patrick Ewing
- 7479 Mark Jackson
- 7474 Byron Scott
- 7443 Magic Johnson
- 7446 James Worthy
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Getting a Hold on the Heisman

In the cut-throat race for the annual award, some college programs are abandoning sportsmanship for flashy numbers

By ALLEN BARRE

**College
'92
Preview**

THE CRITERION FOR WINNING the Heisman Trophy is simple: You have to be, in the words of New York's Downtown Athletic Club and its voters, "the outstanding college football player in the United States." The words are simple; figuring out how to apply them is impossible. What does "outstanding" really mean? The most skilled? The most exciting? The most talented? And in whose view? All of those are subjective categories, and the voters see only a few of the most hyped candidates, and then just a couple of times a year. What if the best player in the country, in terms of skill and playing his position, is a guard for Utah? Who would ever know it?

Actually, the best player might play for Notre Dame, and no one would know it. The truth is that linemen and defensive backs have no real shot at the Heisman. It's an award reserved for quarterbacks, runners, and wideouts—the guys with the stats. (That's not what it was intended for, however. Until the mid-'60s a player was supposed to put in some time on both sides of the ball, so those who contend that an era of two-platoon football should feature two Heismans, one for offense and one for defense, have an argument rooted in historical fact.)

What concerns us now, though, is the Heisman as it is: namely, an award for ball-

handlers from major college teams. Is it even possible to determine the outstanding back or receiver? The task was simpler in an era when sportsmanship was in fashion, but something ugly has entered the Heisman equation in recent years. Schools have taken to boosting their players' stats by pouring it on helpless opponents—and this distasteful tactic generally works.

How else to explain the candidacy of Houston's David Klingler? Whatever his future as a pro passer, Klingler was never more than a mediocre college player. That statement sounds astonishing in the face of Klingler's career passing numbers, but when you look more closely his record starts to disintegrate like the Cougars offensive line under a Miami pass rush.

In 1990, for instance, when Klingler began to be touted as a Heisman candidate, he threw 54 touchdown passes and Houston finished 10-1. Those are impressive *quantities*, but what kind of *quality* do they reflect? The answer: not much. The stat that best reflects a quarterback's ability—the one that shows up most often in the winner's column—is yards per throw. In 1990 Klingler averaged just 8.0 yards per pass attempt, less than Shawn Moore, Ty Detmer, Casey Weldon, Craig Erickson, Rick Mirer, Shawn Jones, Tommy Maddox, or just about any other good college passer you would want to throw into the comparison (including such memorable names as Garrett Gabriel of Hawaii and Ralph Martini of San Jose State). More to the point, Klingler compiled those numbers playing for a relatively strong team against a weak schedule. Against the three good teams he faced—Baylor, Texas A&M, and Texas—he was plain lousy, completing less than half of his 171 passes for 1,056 yards, for a less-than-mediocre 6.2 yards per pass attempt, and two more interceptions than touchdown passes. Then, after a dismal performance against Texas, the only first-rate team he faced all year, Klingler "rebounded" to throw 11 touchdown passes against Eastern Washington, a small col-

lege most football fans never had heard of until Klingler made it famous. (For the record, Eastern Washington was not just a small school; it was a small school with a 5-6 record in 1990.)

For this disgraceful bit of electioneering, a stunt that surely violated every canon of sportsmanship college football says it stands for, Klingler became a Heisman Trophy candidate. To illustrate how little analysis the media really give these things, *The Sporting News* made Klingler its cover boy and preseason Heisman favorite for the '91 season. Unfortunately for Klingler, Houston's second game was against Miami, a slightly tougher opponent than Eastern Washington. Klingler must have been wishing he could have saved about 10 of those touchdown passes from Eastern Washington for the Hurricanes, who blitzed the Cougars 40-10. Klingler was basically eliminated from Heisman contention by halftime.

Unfortunately, Klingler's example is far from isolated. In recent years Nebraska, Oklahoma State, and BYU—to name only the schools that were most successful at the PR game—have been rewarded for piling it on the dogs. (For that matter, Houston also has been successful, copping a 1989 trophy for Andre Ware in a blueprint for how Heisman hype should be handled.)

Is there anything that can be done about this? Acknowledging that it's impossible to definitively identify the outstanding ball-handler, let alone the single most outstanding college football player in America, is it nonetheless possible to set up some common-sense standards? It seems to us that four basic guidelines should be applied to any candidate. We'll present them in the form of questions:

1. Is the player, as near as can be determined, the best in the country at his position?
2. Is he really the reason for his team's success, or is he merely one of a team of athletes so talented that they simply overpower most of their opponents? In other words, do all those fabulous statistics really reflect his achievement or his team's?
3. Are all those numbers he compiled really relevant—that is, do they really have to do with winning games? (If applied to Klingler, this question would take the form of: How many touchdown passes does it really take to beat Eastern Washington?)
4. Were the numbers compiled against worthy opponents, or were they simply rolled up on a bunch of second-rate teams to impress voters?

Let's use these guidelines to look at the player we project as the favorite for this year's award, as well as the other leading candidates:

The Quietest

By ALLEN BARRA

College
'92
Preview

DID YOU HEAR THE LATEST joke about Salman Rushdie? He wanted a public profile so low no terrorist could ever find him. So he moved down south, became a quarterback in the Southeastern Conference, won player of the year honors for three straight seasons, and was never heard from again.

OK, we're making this up, but the scenario isn't so far-fetched that Rushdie might not want to consider the deal. Florida's Shane Matthews has been the SEC player of the year for the last two seasons; if he wins it this year he'll join Herschel Walker as the only three-time winners in conference history. Here's why the league's coaches have selected him two years running:

- In perhaps the most competitive conference in the country over the last two years, Matthews has won 13 of 14 games. Overall he's 19-4.
- He's thrown 51 TD passes over the last two years against 30 interceptions.
- Despite a twisted knee, he threw for a Sugar Bowl-record 370 yards against Notre Dame.
- He's thrown for more than 200 yards in 17 consecutive games.
- He's passed for 300 or more yards in 11 of 23 games.
- He's beaten more good teams over the last two years than any quarterback in the country.
- He was the outstanding college football player in the nation last year and probably over the last two.

That last one is subjective, but the rest of it is true, and yet you probably didn't know all this about him. Don't feel bad—you're in good company. Last year Matthews had one of the three or four best seasons any quarterback has enjoyed in the era of two-platoon football, and he wasn't even one of the three passers in the running for that stupid award they give to quarterbacks whose names no one can ever remember. To add insult to injury, when *Sports Illustrated* finally elected to do a preseason profile on an SEC quarterback it chose Georgia's Eric Zeier—a fine passer, but one who has thrown exactly seven TD passes so far in his career. That's only

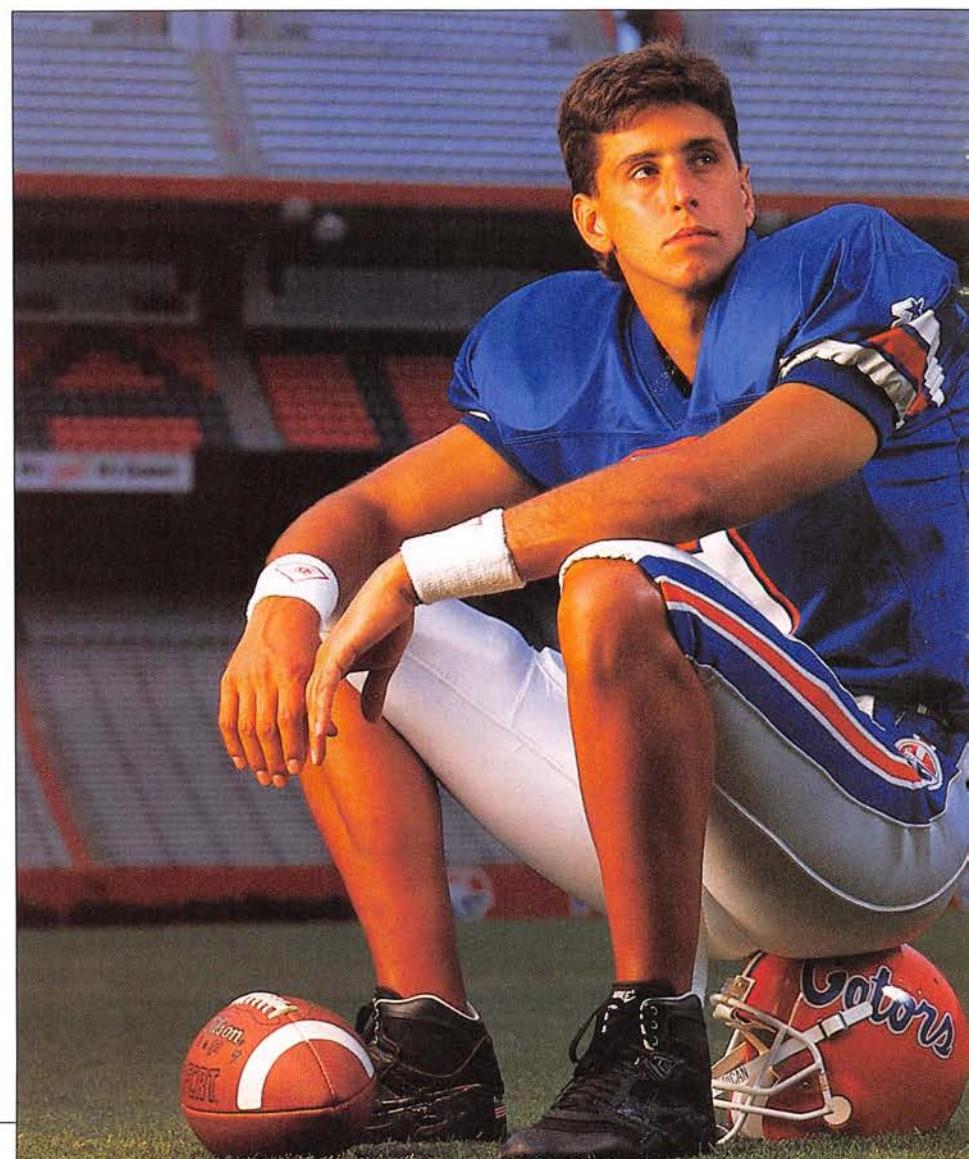
three more than Matthews threw in the Gators' 45-13 slaughter of Zeier's school last year, and exactly as many as Matthews has thrown against the Bulldogs in their last two meetings.

So how come no one knows who Shane Matthews is? "I don't think that's true," says Matthews, who speaks in a voice more reserved than you would expect from a quarterback who has to scream signals over howling crowds in Baton Rouge and Knoxville. "I get a request for an autograph now and then. I'm probably better known down here than I want to be. I stopped at a Dairy Queen last year, and I couldn't get out without signing autographs."

OK, so he's got the local Dairy Queens nailed down, but where's the *national* publicity? Matthews already has put together a career as impressive as those of former

Heisman winners Doug Flutie and Vinny Testaverde, who were national celebrities before their senior years began, and yet last year he lost the national publicity campaign not only to cross-state rival Casey Weldon at Florida State but to David Klingler at Houston. Matthews ended up with more touchdown passes and a higher yards-per-throw average than either—and against tougher opposition—and yet he's at the top of almost no one's preseason Heisman list this season.

"Don't ask me why," says Terrell Buckley, a former Seminole and now a Green Bay Packers defensive back. "I think the guy is the greatest passer I've ever seen, and that includes anyone I saw at Miami." Buckley, who was Matthews' teammate in high school, ranks the Gator and his former college teammate, Weldon,



Quarterback

as near equals, but says: "Let's just say I've got to give Shane the edge because I've seen him from the other side of the ball. Now whenever I see a quarterback with a great touch or one who knows how to hit an area you think is covered, I say, 'Wow, that reminds me of Shane."

Would Buckley, who played against Desmond Howard, have voted for Matthews if the Heisman folks had asked him? "That's a tough one," Buckley says. Howard caught two TD passes against FSU last season but had only two other catches all day for a total of 69 yards; Buckley had

two interceptions, one a return for a touchdown. He calls the matchup a "jump ball." Matthews, who riddled the Seminoles for 351 yards in 1990, played perhaps his worst game of the season against them in 1991, going 13-for-30 for 208 yards, one TD,

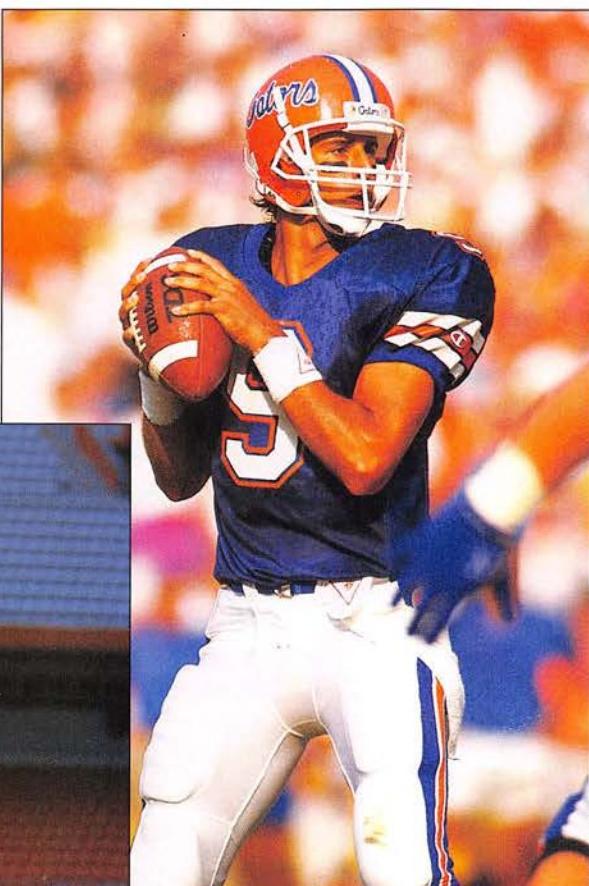
that Matthews is a shrinking violet—along with his coach, former Heisman winner Steve Spurrier, Matthews has held weekly press conferences during the football season to deal with the steady flow of questions from print journalists—but like the gunfighter he was named after, Shane sometimes will not speak until spoken to.

"He's polite and responsive to reporters," says a Gainesville sports writer, "but sometimes he gives you one- or two-word answers when you'd like him to open up. He sometimes seems like he'd rather be somewhere else." A teammate who has known Matthews since he came to Florida responds, "He would rather be somewhere else: on the football field, or in his room, reading." Matthews can exhibit a wry sense of humor—when a writer spotted him in the same New Orleans Saints T-shirt two days in a row, he cracked, "It's the only thing I had that was clean"—but his attitude on game day inspires victories, not colorful anecdotes. "Everyone in the stadium gets excited before a game," he says. "I try to get unexcited."

One knock on Matthews—and this is hard to figure—is that his incredible stats are somehow the product of "the system," the pro-style passing attack Spurrier has installed at Florida. This rankles Matthews a bit, and although he's polite enough not to dismiss any of his contemporaries you can see that it gets to him. "David Klingler," he says, "is a great passer, and he'll be a great NFL quarterback, but he got to throw the ball 70 times a game, whether his team was ahead or behind. David Klingler was the product of Houston's system. We pass to build a lead, and when we get a big one we run the ball more."

The running game—or the fact that Mississippi decided to stress it when Matthews was graduating from Pascagoula (Miss.) High School—is the reason he opted for Florida. (His father, Bill, was a wingback for the Rebels from 1965 to '67, and Shane grew up "collecting every Archie Manning football card I could find.") Things didn't click at Florida right away: He was listed as fifth out of five on the depth chart until Spurrier showed up.

Spurrier saw—and continues to see—things in Matthews that others don't. *Don Heinrich's College Football* once described Matthews as a "very weak arm, skinny, product of the system." (Matthews' response: "Skinny? I'm 192 pounds, and I



TOM DIPACE

Without fanfare, Matthews has gone 19-4 against very tough opponents.

and three interceptions. Still, as Buckley points out, one of those interceptions was meaningless, a heave just before the half, "and he did break things open with that long [72-yard] touchdown pass." And, as Buckley is quick to add: "Shane won the game. It was maybe his worst game, against the toughest D in the country, and he won. Yeah, I think he did more for his team than anyone I saw all year. I'd give him that trophy."

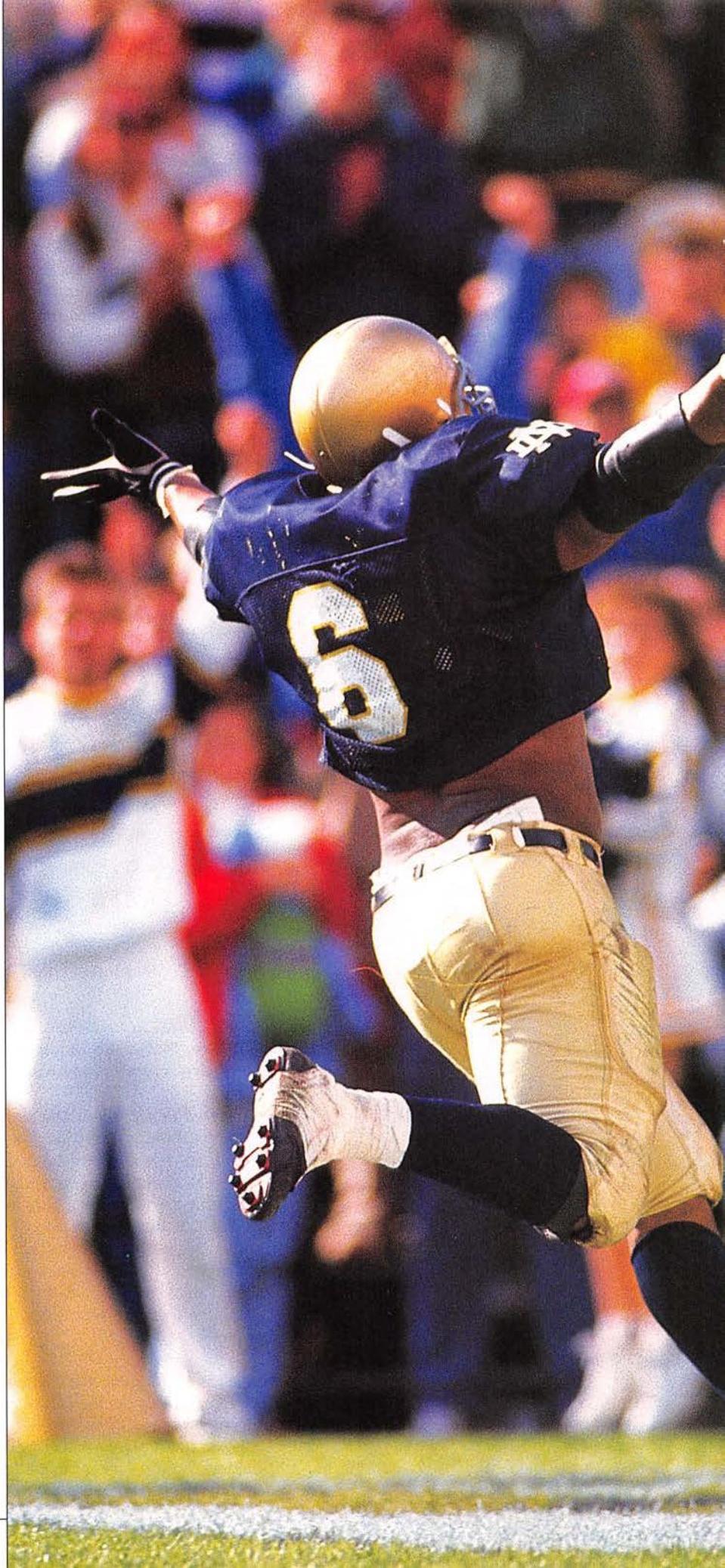
If Florida can make a national championship run this season, the Heisman voters may have to give it to him. However, part of the problem is that he'll have to perform much better than the other candidates just to get noticed. Not

can bench-press 300." Mel Kiper Jr., a draft analyst for ESPN, called him "another great college QB who deserves all the credit in the world for being successful in a system and doing a tremendous job at the college level"—but, Kiper added, "I don't see him being successful in the pro system." All this annoys Spurrier. "What does that 'product of the system' mean?" he says. "What great player isn't the product of a system? Doesn't any system require talent to be successful? Why wouldn't anyone who wants to win design a system around Shane Matthews?"

Why, indeed. The idea that he can't make it as a pro—a charge leveled in college at some of pro football's greatest passers, such as Johnny Unitas, Bart Starr, and Joe Montana—probably has been the biggest single factor in Matthews' lack of national recognition. Consider this: Against seven good teams last year—seven teams whose combined won-lost records excluding the Florida games was a frightening 57-14—Matthews passed for 1,940 yards with 17 TDs and 13 interceptions. His yards-per-pass average was an impressive 8.2. Piling it on the dogs? Matthews' "quality" stats—his yards-per-throw and interception rates—were better against the seven good teams on Florida's schedule than they were against the four bad ones. Piling it on the dogs? Yeah, the Georgia Bulldogs, the Mississippi State Bulldogs, the Auburn Tigers, the Kentucky Wildcats—at this rate the ASPCA is going to be after him.

No quarterback—no player—in the country last year approached such a level of performance against such tough opposition; in fact, against Florida State, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Syracuse, and Mississippi State (combined record: 53-14), Matthews faced more good defenses than Ty Detmer and Klingler combined. Only two quarterbacks in the last 30 years have put up such terrific numbers against such tough opponents: Flutie in 1984 and Steve Walsh in 1988. Florida's schedule was tougher last year than Boston College's in 1984, and no one would really contend that Florida's talent level last year matched Miami's in 1988. All this doesn't mean that Matthews is the best quarterback in modern college football, but it sure doesn't indicate that he's not.

If Matthews' kind of greatness proves not to be the NFL's style, he has a back-up plan: "I'm going to go home and work on my golf game. I think I can make it on the PGA if I try." At least if Shane Matthews makes it there, no one will be able to give the credit to "the system."





The Consumer's Guide to the Heisman Trophy

We give you the lowdown on candidates such as Notre Dame's Jerome Bettis [left] and tell you who'll challenge Shane Matthews for the prize

**College
'92
Preview**

JEROME BETTIS,
running back, junior, and
RICK MIRER,
quarterback, senior
(Notre Dame)

Traditional wisdom says you can't have two Heisman trophy candidates on the same team, and that makes sense: There just isn't enough offense to go around. College coaches have to choose between a running or a passing offense. All that stuff about balance is an illusion, a load of hogwash thrown out by coaches who can't choose. In modern, big-time college football, either you commit yourself to the run and, if that fails, use the pass under unfavorable circumstances to play catch-up, or you pass early, build a lead, then use the running game to run down the clock in the second half.

For the first nine games last year, Notre Dame was the second kind of team. Lou Holtz was letting Mirer throw on first down—not just safety-valve stuff but airing it out, loosening up defenses and giving the Irish defense, in most cases, a sizeable lead to defend late in the game. For those first nine games Mirer was the best player in the country, a more legitimate Heisman candidate than Desmond Howard or Ty Detmer or Shane Matthews or anyone.

Here are his numbers for the first nine games [box at left]:

Comp.: 93
Atts.: 157
Pct.: .592
Yds.: 1,558
Yds./Att.: 9.9
TDs-Ints.: 17-8

Those are absolutely awesome numbers—anytime a passer averages more than nine yards

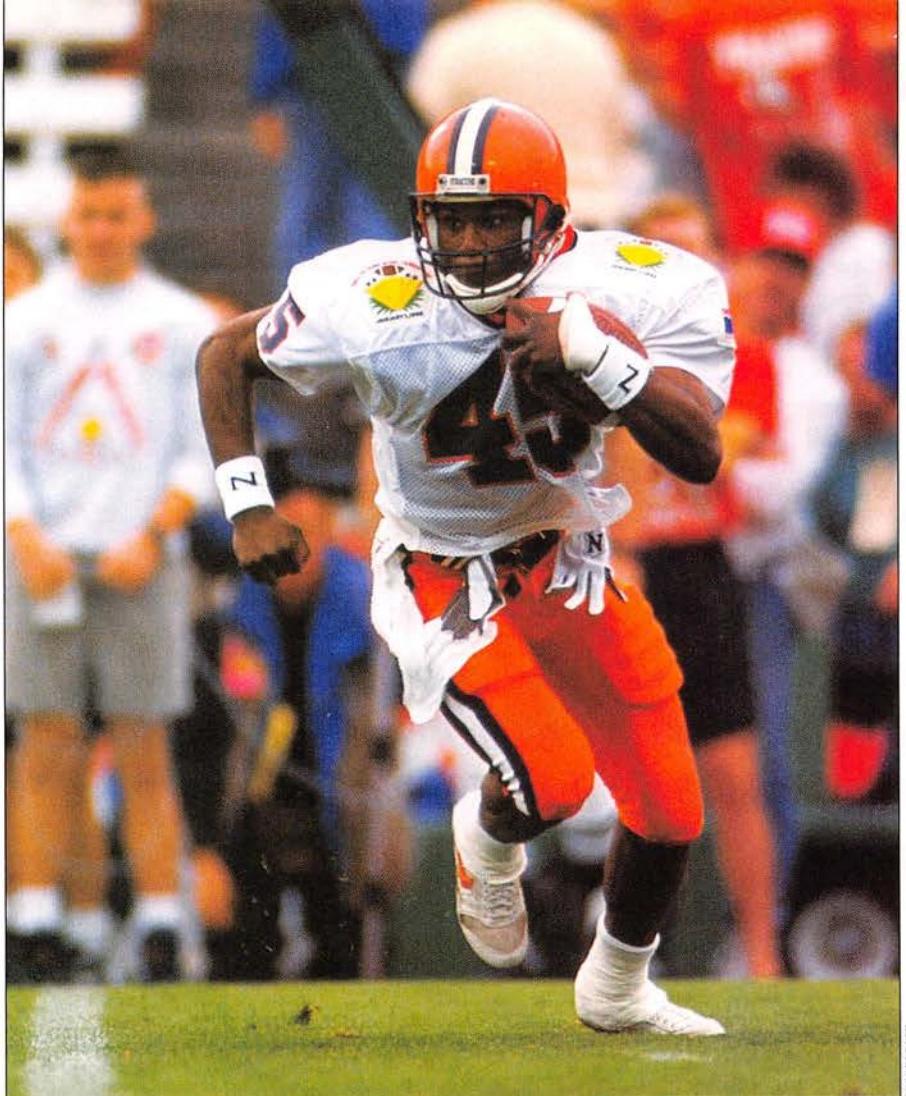
a throw you ought to be clearing space for his place in the College Football Hall of Fame, and Mirer was close to 10, with more than twice as many touchdown passes as interceptions. In addition, don't forget Mirer's brilliant running and handling of the option. It also should be noted that these numbers were racked up against some fairly good teams: Indiana, Michigan (against whom Mirer actually had a fairly good day: 234 yards on 25 passes, with two TDs), Stanford, Pittsburgh, and Air Force were all winning teams, while USC was far better than its 3-8 record indicated.

Then, starting with the Tennessee game, Holtz decided he wanted a running team. The Irish began to run on first down and usually on second, often leaving Mirer with the difficult task of pulling the offense out of a hole on third-and-long, with the defense stacked against him. The Notre Dame passing attack went south, and the season went with it. Here is Mirer's record for the last three games against Tennessee, Penn State, and Hawaii, in which the Irish were outscored 112-95 [box, below]:

Bettis is a terrific running back, packing enormous power and astonishing speed into his 6-foot, 250-pound frame. Last year he gained 972 yards on just 168 carries—5.8 per try, better than any other Heisman candidate back—and rushed for 16 TDs. He's also a dangerous receiver, grabbing 17 passes for 190 yards and four touchdowns last year. His offensive num-

Comp.: 39
Atts.: 77
Pct.: .506
Yds.: 558
Yds./Att.: 7.2
TDs-Ints.: 12

ANTHONY NESTE



TOM DI PACE

The Missile's explosiveness puts hapless Qadry pursuers in a quandry.

bers are all the more impressive since he didn't touch the ball more than 20 times in a game until the Irish met Stanford, five weeks into the season. If Holtz chooses he probably can give Bettis another 100 or so extra chances with the ball. This will tack on 400 or 500 or so yards and possibly a few more touchdowns to his '91 totals.

However, Notre Dame can't make a legitimate run at No. 1 that way. The days are gone when super-conservative coaches can run their way to national titles—the quality of the opposition is too good at the top, as anyone who saw the Miami-Nebraska scrimmage in last year's Orange Bowl can tell you. (Nebraska could run the ball at the Hurricanes until the next Orange Bowl without scoring.) Bettis is a terrific runner, but he broke a lot of long runs last season because defenses were downfield expecting Mirer's passes. When opponents stopped expecting Mirer's passes, they eventually shut down Bettis, too (or took him out of the game as Penn State did, by forcing the Irish to play catch-up). We'll see if Holtz has learned his lesson in '92: As Mirer goes, so goes Bettis—and so go the Irish. **Grades:** Mirer A, Bettis B. /All

grades are based upon our evaluation of the candidates according to the guidelines set forth in this feature.]

QADRY ISMAIL, flanker, senior (Syracuse)

Pop quiz: Which set of stats (see next column) belong to which Ismail?

Answer: The bottom set is Rocket in '90; the top set is his little brother—"the Missile"?—last year. Except for punt returns, which Syracuse doesn't use Qadry for (why not, we wonder?), the stats are startlingly similar. Rocket didn't deserve the Heisman in '90—he simply didn't get the ball often enough—but for sheer impact he may have been the most important college player of the last couple of decades. Qadry might be as good or at least close to it. He's in pretty much the same position as Alabama's David Palmer—too bad the Bama PR people got the nickname "Pocket Rocket" first—in that his chances depend on how often his team can get the ball to him. If he gets it, he'll do the rest: His "quality" numbers—i.e., yards per catch, run, and return—were much more impressive than Desmond

Rushing	Atts.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Rushing	12	216	18.0	3
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TDS
Receiving	37	693	18.7	3
Kickoff Rets.	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Kickoff Rets.	19	475	25.0	1
Punt Rets.	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Punt Rets.	0	0	0	0

Rushing	Atts.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Rushing	67	537	8.0	3
Receiving	Rec.	Yds.	Avg.	TDS
Receiving	32	699	21.8	2
Kickoff Rets.	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Kickoff Rets.	14	336	24.0	1
Punt Rets.	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs
Punt Rets.	13	151	11.6	0

Howard's. And Syracuse doesn't look to have a killer game before the November 21 match with Miami. **Grade:** B+.

ELVIS GRBAC, quarterback, senior (Michigan)

As noted, we rate the players on their worthiness, not on their chances of winning. Grbac is a top-flight candidate with zero chance of winning the Heisman. Not only do voters hate to give the award to players from the same school in a close time frame (although whoever wrote that unwritten rule had no qualms about giving it to USC and Ohio State tailbacks), but in Grbac's case a Heisman would be a tacit admission that they gave it to the wrong guy in '91. Frankly, we were surprised that Desmond Howard got so much more support than Grbac last season. No matter how spectacular a receiver's catches are, some passer has to put the ball out there—and Grbac's numbers were sensational: 1,955 yards on 228 passes (a healthy 8.6 average) with 24 touchdowns and just five interceptions. He didn't face the toughest of schedules, but neither did he pile it on the dogs. Don't be surprised to see Grbac maintain those kind of numbers without Howard to throw to; good passers tend to have good seasons no matter who their batterymates are. **Grade:** B+.

ERIC ZEIER, quarterback, sophomore (Georgia)

Archie Manning reportedly called him "the best young quarterback I've ever seen." You could find 12 veterans to say that about 12 young quarterbacks every year, but there's a good chance Zeier actually may be the best young quarterback Manning or a lot of others have ever seen. With only six regular-season starts under his belt, he's got a lot to learn—but if those six starts are any indication, Zeier's got a lot to show, too. He set school records for attempts, completions, and yardage, and

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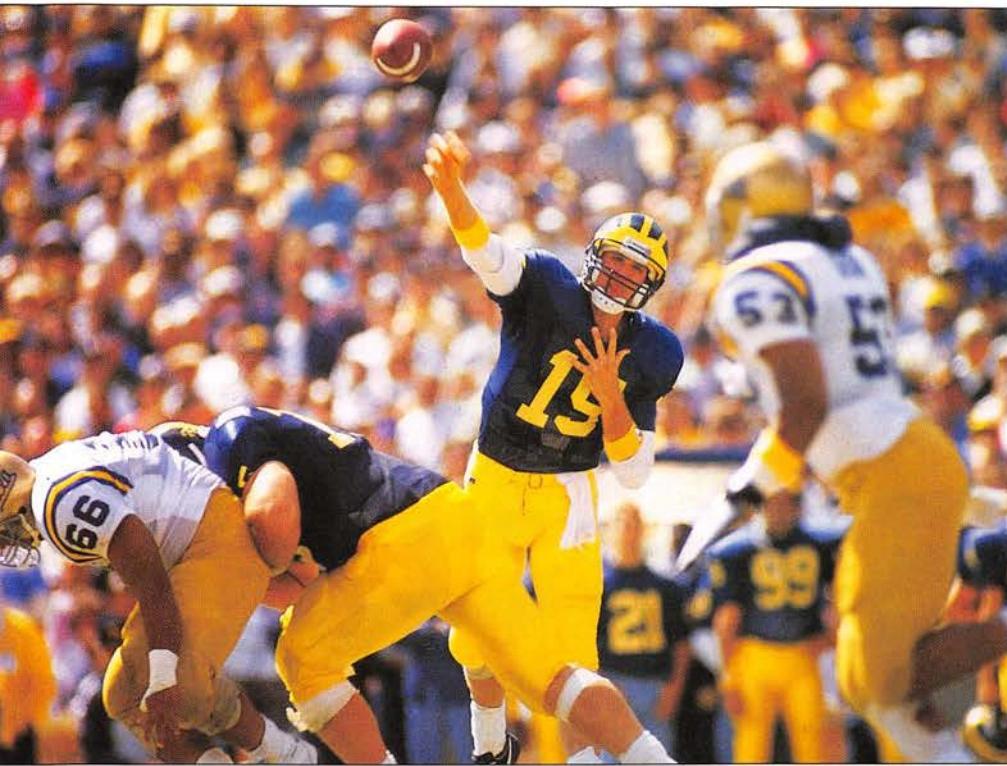
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DAMIAN STROHMEYER/ALLSPORT

Will there be an Elvis sighting at the Downtown Athletic Club? Probably not.

he also set an SEC record for lowest interception percentage, 1.4% (4 in 286 throws). However, Zeier probably won't win no matter what he does. His 1,984 yards on 286 passes gave him an unimpressive net of 6.9 yards a throw. Still, not having to face Alabama's defense this season helps, and a strong showing against Matthews and Florida on October 31 could make him a front-runner for '93. Grade: B+.

RUSSELL WHITE, running back, senior (California)

White's a terrific all-around player—a workhorse runner (421 carries over the last two years) who can break big gainers (a 5.2 average for two seasons), return kicks, and catch passes (just under a 10-yard-per-catch average for his career)—but it's going to take a great performance in a big game to help him break away from the pack. In Cal's two biggest games last year, losses to Washington and Stanford, he had just 35 carries for 144 yards. If he doubles that production this year, and if the Golden Bears win just one of those two big games, he might well be the most heralded running back in the country. Hint to the California coaching staff: It probably wouldn't hurt his chances or yours if you let him catch a few more passes this year. Grade: B+.

O.J. McDUFFIE, wide receiver, senior (Penn State)

There isn't much chance that McDuffie will be a Heisman candidate this year—

with Tony Sacca gone, the odds are that Joe Paterno will play grind-it-out until a new passer is developed. However, it wouldn't hurt to consider McDuffie's achievements in '91: 790 yards on 46 receptions, 105 yards on seven carries, 117 yards on five kickoff returns, and 358 yards on 33 punt returns. How impressive is that? Let's put it this way: McDuffie's yards-per-try averages in all categories except punt returns were better than Desmond Howard's (and Howard won that one only by virtue of a 93-yarder in the last game of the season), and O.J. did it against a schedule at least as tough as Michigan's.

We'll tell you something else: McDuffie's stats weren't padded with "gimmies" against second-level teams the way Howard's were. For instance, against Georgia Tech, USC, BYU, Miami, and Notre Dame he caught a total of 26 passes for 403 yards—better than 15 a pop—and five of his six touchdowns. Let's put that in perspective: If Paterno had chosen to get the ball to McDuffie against bad and mediocre teams, his numbers probably would have looked something like this: 57 receptions for 900 yards and 11 touchdowns. Now against the five good teams on Michigan's schedule—Notre Dame, Florida State, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio State—Desmond Howard caught just 22 passes for 318 yards (an average of fewer than 15 yards) and eight touchdowns. If he hadn't had the ball thrown to him so often against bad and mediocre teams, his numbers would have probably looked something like

this: 46 receptions for 800 yards and 17 touchdowns.

All of this doesn't mean that McDuffie is better than Howard, but it doesn't mean he isn't. If Penn State comes out throwing this year McDuffie could be the standard all receivers are measured by. Grade: A.

BENO BRYANT, running back, senior (Washington)

He's a nifty runner but not enough of a workhorse to get the lion's share of the credit for the Huskies' success. In fact, given the talent level of the national champs, there's no indication that Bryant performed at a higher level than his teammates. (Don't be fooled by all-purpose yardage; he was unspectacular last year as a punt returner and receiver.) If the Huskies start to falter in defense of their much-deserved national title, they might fall back on Bryant and give him a chance to show off—and if that happens he'd better do better than the 22 yards on 13 carries he got against Stanford. Grade: C.

KEVIN WILLIAMS, running back, senior (UCLA)

With 1,089 yards and 6.5 yards per rush—despite playing with a bad ankle and ribs—he's probably a more genuine Heisman candidate than Beno Bryant. However, Williams has got to show up more in the big games: Against Cal and Stanford he had just 118 yards on 31 carries. Grade: B.

MARSHALL FAULK, running back, sophomore (San Diego State)

Let's be realistic here—154 yards in 27 carries against Miami is a hell of a performance, but there would have to be at least one other first-rate performance against a first-rate team to make Faulk a legitimate contender. He gained 925 yards and scored 15 touchdowns against Pacific, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Colorado State. We are not impressed. Grade: D.

Beno's been riding the coattails of his talented teammates at Washington.

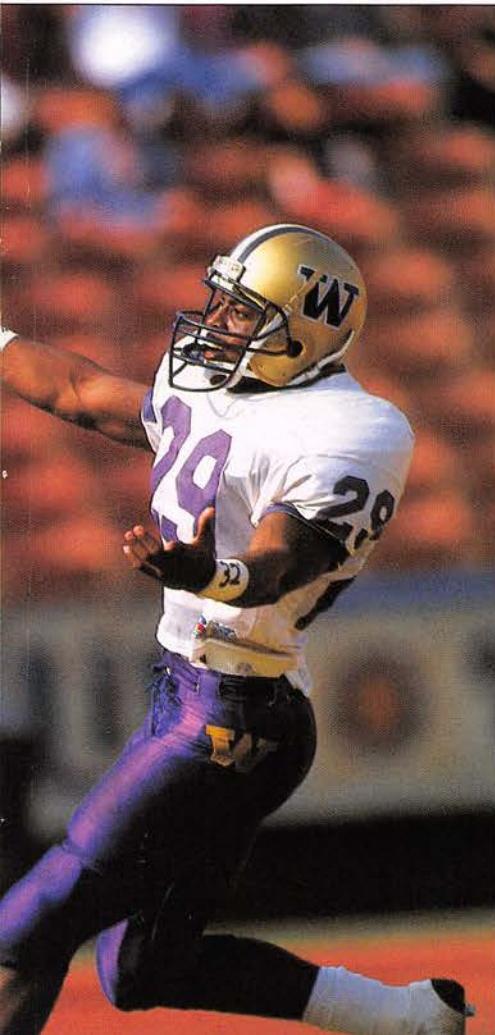
MIKE POWELL/ALLSPORT



DAVID PALMER, flanker, sophomore
(Alabama)

This would be a long shot even if we weren't talking about a sophomore—this kid only touched the ball 69 times last season—but for sheer impact he may be the most valuable player in the nation. Palmer's quality numbers were all much more impressive than Desmond Howard's: an 18-plus yard-per-catch average on 17 receptions; a 23.4 average on 10 kickoff returns, a 17-yard average on 24 punt returns; and 156 rushing yards on 18 carries (8.7 average). This is one guy for whom the all-purpose yardage category means something; he even scored the winning touchdown against Auburn while playing quarterback! He's got as much talent as any candidate in the country, and he's got the best nickname—whoever thought up "the Pocket Rocket" (Palmer is only 5'9") deserves a promotion.

What Palmer needs, though, is to play in an offensive system that will exploit his full talents. Discounting special teams, he only handled the ball 35 times during the regular season—not nearly enough to win the Heisman. Jay Barker, who threw three scoring passes in the Blockbuster Bowl, has the gun to get him the ball; let's see if coach Gene Stallings has the nerve to pull the trigger. Grade: A. —A.B. ■



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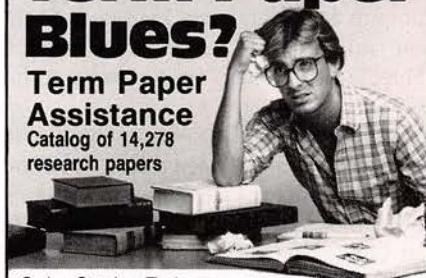
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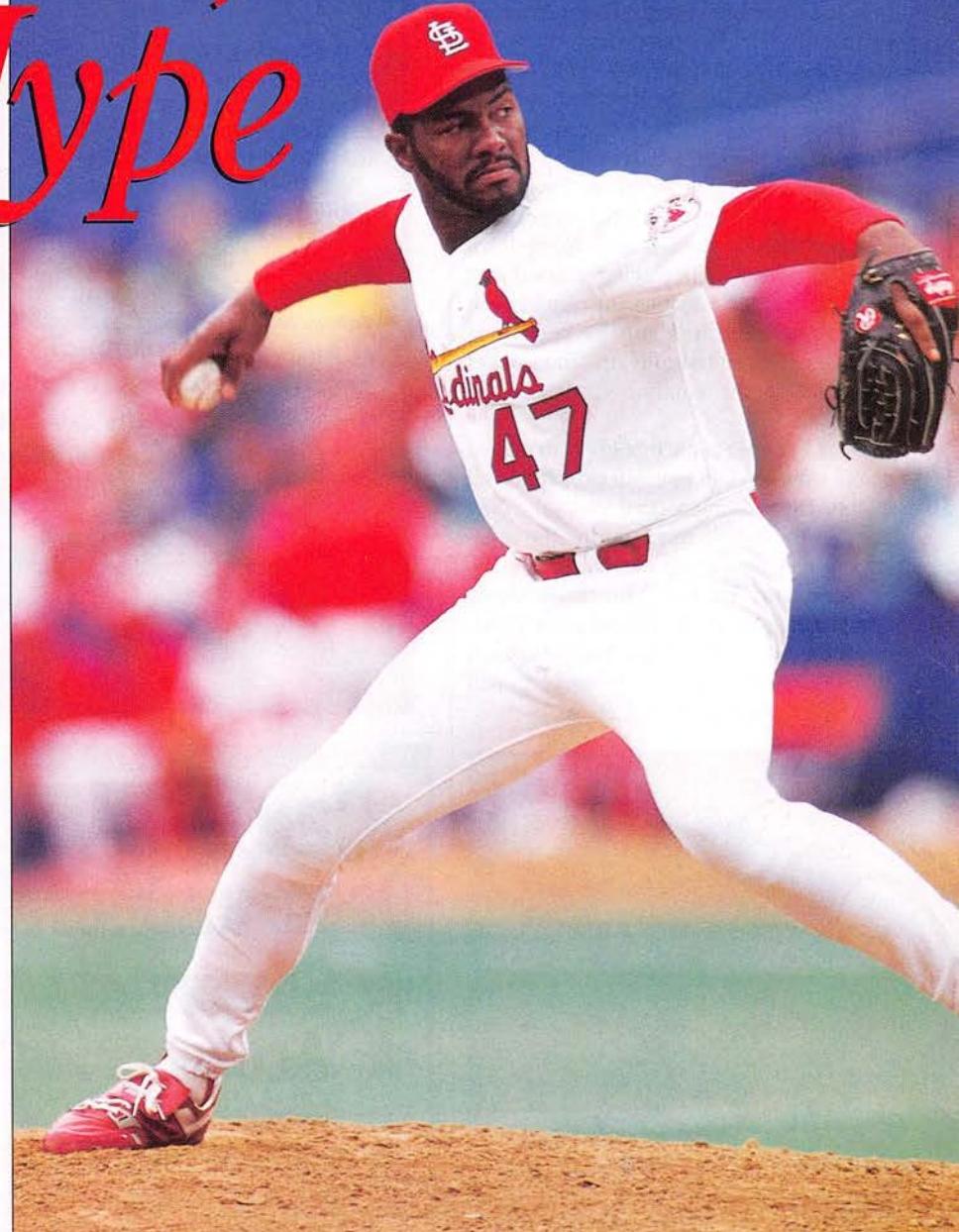
*Lee Smith,
a dominant reliever
for the last 10 years,
could make the Hall of
Fame without making
a splash*

By TRACY RINGOLSBY

LEE SMITH, ALL 6'6" AND roughly 250 pounds of him, came lumbering out the clubhouse at the St. Louis Cardinals training camp in St. Petersburg, Fla., last spring and smiled as the fan approached him. "Felix," said the fan, "are you going to hit .300 again this year?"

Such is life for Lee Arthur Smith. He was fresh off a 1991 season in which he earned a National League-record 47 saves and climbed to third on the all-time save list (29 behind the record holder, Rollie Fingers), and this diehard Cardinals fan thought he was outfielder Felix Jose, who is five inches shorter, at least 40 pounds lighter, and nearly eight years younger than the 34-year-old Smith. He even had a fan at the St. Louis writers' winter baseball dinner ask for his autograph—on a life-size poster of Jose. "I guess I'm suffering from an identity crisis," says Smith.

He shrugs his shoulders. No big deal. Nothing seems to bother this physically intimidating man with a teddy bear personality. If outsiders don't know him that's OK; Smith knows where he came from and who he is, and he's comfortable with his lot in life. One of five children of a man who made a living hauling pulpwood around northwest Louisiana, Smith lived through the integration of the state's public schools to become perhaps the best unknown relief pitcher in the history of the game.



Smitty notched 47 saves in '91: "If I make the Hall, fine. If I don't, no biggie."

That big cat smile flashes across his face at the mention of the possibility that his career eventually will earn him enshrinement in baseball's Hall of Fame, an avenue that has just begun to open up for relief pitchers. Only in the last few years have relievers made the ascension from life as second-class citizens to primary ingredients of a successful baseball team.

Think about it. Fingers was snubbed in his first year of eligibility, but he earned election the second time around, joining Hoyt Wilhelm as the only pitchers in the

Hall who made their mark on the game by working out of the bullpen. However, of the top 10 men on baseball's all-time save list, only Fingers, Wilhelm, and Sparky Lyle have been retired the five-year minimum required for consideration. Smith, Jeff Reardon of the Boston Red Sox (the new all-time leader), Goose Gossage of the Oakland A's, Dave Righetti of the San Francisco Giants, and John Franco of the New York Mets are still active. Sometime in this decade, however, that will start to change. The names of the Smiths,



Reardons, and Gossages will be there for consideration, and when that happens . . .

"I want to be known for being one of the best pitchers in the game from the players," says Smith. "To get Mike Schmidt or Cal Ripken or Andre Dawson to say, 'Smitty's one of the best pitchers I ever faced—that's what I want. If I make the Hall of Fame, fine. If I don't, no biggie. To tell you the truth, I didn't want to play baseball, so I can't say going into the Hall of Fame was a childhood dream. It would be a great honor, but it's not something I grew up wanting to achieve."

As Smith said, he never had much interest in baseball as a kid. He was, in his words, "blackmailed" into playing the sport on an organized basis for the first time his junior year in high school, and he signed with the Chicago Cubs as a second-round draft pick out of Castor (La.) High School back in June of 1975 for money, nothing more. He planned to play three years, collect the \$60,000—"We're talking more money than my dad could make in three years"—hang up his spikes, and pursue his childhood ambition of an NBA career. In fact, while he was pitching in

the summer for the Cubs he would leave early each year to attend classes at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, La., an NAIA school 40 miles from his home, where he had a full ride to play basketball.

Many major leaguers wish Smith had pursued his first love instead of making their lives miserable with a durable right arm that initially allowed him to flat-out overpower hitters with a fastball in the mid-90s. "Back in high school he was simply the best athlete in that part of the country," says longtime scout Doug Gassaway, whose territory has included Louisiana for

as long as he's been digging up prospects, first for the Philadelphia Phillies, then the Cubs, and now the Texas Rangers. "Tell you what: He could throw a strawberry through a battleship."

Over the years, though, Smith has made adjustments. He initially added a hard-breaking slider, which has become such an integral part of his arsenal that hitters are just as likely to see it on a 3-1 count as 0-2. In the middle of last year he began to incorporate a split-fingered pitch at the suggestion of fellow pitcher Frank DiPino and with the endorsement of Cardinals pitching coach Joe Coleman. "I've gone from a thrower to a guy who feels like he has a pretty good idea what he's trying to do on each pitch with each hitter," says Smith. "I'm as confident in the forkball as the fastball. I used it twice on [Cincinnati Reds first baseman] Hal Morris last year, and he got thrown out of both games. He didn't think they were strikes. I like to plant the seed in the guy's mind that Smitty has another pitch, and I feel more confidence in it than the straight change."

One thing hasn't changed over the years however: the results. Smith may be mistaken for Jose occasionally, but there's no mistaking his durability and consistency. Those traits are so pronounced it's hard to believe that first the Cubs and then the Red Sox saw fit to trade Smith, both times privately expressing concern about his longevity.

"When I got traded by the Cubs, I found how much was wrong with me," says Smith. "They said I had a bad back and bad knees. I had arthroscopic knee surgery in 1983, and it was 1987 when I got traded, but everybody was talking about my back and knee. Nobody said anything about the fact I pitch 65 or 70 games a year. It seems when a guy gets traded teams have to make up a reason. I never worried about it. I just went about my business and at the end of each year let the numbers do the talking."

The numbers speak loudly. Last season Smith became the first pitcher in history to appear in more than 60 games a season for 10 consecutive years, averaging 66 appearances in the past decade. He's now had 10 consecutive seasons of 20-plus saves, having reached the 30-save level in six of the last eight years, and capped that off by setting the NL record of 47 last year when he converted 19 of his last 20 opportunities.

For all he has done, though, Smith is not a high priority for card shows around the country or for winter-time banquets—and that's fine with him. Once the baseball season comes to an end he wastes little time heading back to

Castor, where he still makes his home. He reacquaints himself with childhood friends and slips anonymously into the backwoods, where he can be found almost every day, hunting and fishing. He will sit for hours at a ballpark during the season, answering questions with effusive replies, but trying to get a couple of minutes from him in Castor makes the idea of trying to hit one of his sliders on the outside black seem simple.

"When the last pitch is thrown I am through with baseball," says Smith. "After all the pressure and stuff you go through during the season, I'm ready to let my guard down. You're a different person off the field than you are on. During the season you have to be on your toes, so when the season is over you want to relax and not worry about what's going on."

However, don't think Smith is oblivious to what's going on around him. He does find time in his offseason relaxation to make appearances at area schools—many of which once refused to play Smith's high school teams because there were blacks in uniform—where he stresses the importance of living a clean life and getting a good education. "My family or friends will ask me how I can go back to those places and try to do things to help those people who wouldn't even [let] me in their schools to play ball," says Smith. "I tell them it wasn't these kids. These kids weren't even born. How can I blame them for what happened so long ago?"

"One thing I want to be noted for is positive things. I know I'd get more publicity if I was in rehab or beating up on the wife; that makes headlines, but it has nothing to do with baseball. That's the whole damn country. I have never claimed to be able to solve world peace. I have enough trouble getting my slider to break."

If Smith could package his approach to life, though, world peace would be attained more easily. For all he has been through, he has no hard feelings. "I never have been one to hold a grudge," he says. "When we integrated the schools I saw stuff I hope my kids never see. It made you grow up faster. You'd see signs outside the school saying, DON'T LET THE NIGGERS IN. Some guys let things linger, but I don't. It would have been easy for me to still think about that home run Steve Garvey hit off me [to help the San Diego Padres beat the Cubs in the 1984 NL playoffs] and take it to my grave. But how many people know that was the first and only hit he ever got off me?"

"Hey, my mom wanted a girl when I was born. I've been under pressure ever since I got here. It's just one of those things. You look at guys like Donnie Moore [haunted

until his death by the home run Dave Henderson hit to help Boston beat the California Angels in the 1986 AL playoffs] in the sense of not being able to let go. Tom Neidenfeur, those home runs he gave up to Ozzie Smith and Jack Clark [in the Cardinals' 1987 playoff victory against the Los Angeles Dodgers]—he still thinks about it. Hey, I've hung as many sliders as anybody, and guys have popped them up. I've thrown good pitches and guys hit them out. I'm only human. I just want to go home each night, put my head on the pillow, and be able to say I did the best job I possibly could. It's not life and death."

No, it's just baseball, and baseball never was a priority to the fourth of five children born to Willie and Bessie Smith. Lee was first approached by his high school baseball coach during a softball game in Smith's freshman year, but he declined an invitation to play on the baseball team. It wasn't until his junior year, when Smith was told if he didn't play baseball he wouldn't be allowed to be part of the school basketball team his senior year, that he relented. "Blackmail," he says. "They twisted my arm so I ended up playing baseball."

Being voted the Louisiana Class B MVP in baseball his senior year didn't impress Smith. First he considered an offer to become quarterback at Grambling State University (a job that eventually went to Doug Williams) and then sorted through a bundle of basketball scholarship offers before finally deciding to take the money from the Cubs. "The situation I came from, you couldn't walk away from that money, so I figured I'd play three years, get all the bonus money, and then I'd be done with baseball," he says.

Even after Smith realized basketball was a dream that would never become a reality and decided to concentrate on baseball, there were some rough moments. In fact, he actually quit midway through the 1979 season. The Cubs had decided to dump him in the bullpen at Class AA Midland, and when the team went to Shreveport on a road trip Smith took all his belongings with him and went home. Billy Williams, the legendary Cub who at the time was a minor league instructor travel-

ing with the Midland team, was dispatched to Castor to get Smith back.

"I was so mad I wanted to break [Midland manager] Randy Hundley's neck," says Smith. "The year before I had pitched 155 innings and walked 128 batters, and they wanted me to be a relief pitcher. Short men are supposed to throw strikes. Billy came to the house and talked to me. I hung around home for two weeks and went fishing, but I finally went back."

By the end of the next season Smith was

in the big leagues for good—as a reliever. The wild man of the minor leagues suddenly found control. After serving an apprenticeship with the Cubs in 1981 and '82, Smith has taken command of the bullpen wherever he has been, from Chicago to Boston to St. Louis. Maybe it was the initial reluctance to commit to baseball. Maybe it was a shyness he admits afflicted him in those early years, when he was overwhelmed by the world he was being exposed to outside of Castor. For some rea-

He Likes the Ball With the Basket

Outside the home in Castor, La., that Lee Smith built as testimony to the financial success he has achieved in baseball sits a basketball court, built by Smith as a monument to the sport that was the object of his childhood devotion. Every now and then during the winter, when he can get enough friends together, Smith still will fill up the hoop and daydream about his professional athletic career he envisioned for himself. "It was my real love," he says.

Smith was so devoted to the game that even after he became a second-round draft choice of the Chicago Cubs in 1975 and signed a professional baseball contract, his real goal was still to play in the NBA. He couldn't accept any of the major college scholarships that were offered by schools such as Kentucky, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Oklahoma, and Arkansas—back then the NCAA would not allow an athlete to be a professional in one sport and play at the college level in another—but he was able to get a scholarship to Northwestern State University, an NAIA-affiliated school in Natchitoches, La., just down the road from Castor. He would leave the Cubs' minor league team early to enroll in school; the plan was to hang around the three years needed to collect his \$60,000 signing bonus from the Cubs and then turn his attention full-time to the hardwood instead of hardball. Then fate stepped onto the court.

"One year I went to the Pizza Hut slam dunk competition and screwed up my knee," says Smith. "Then I had a tryout with the New Orleans Jazz, but the doctors and coaches told me even if I made it to the NBA I might only last a couple of years because I didn't have any cartilage in my knee. So I was swayed to baseball. I don't think I would have gotten 12 years in the NBA."

"I probably had a better fastball than a jump shot. In basketball I was a runt. I'd have been a point guard. I guess things worked out."

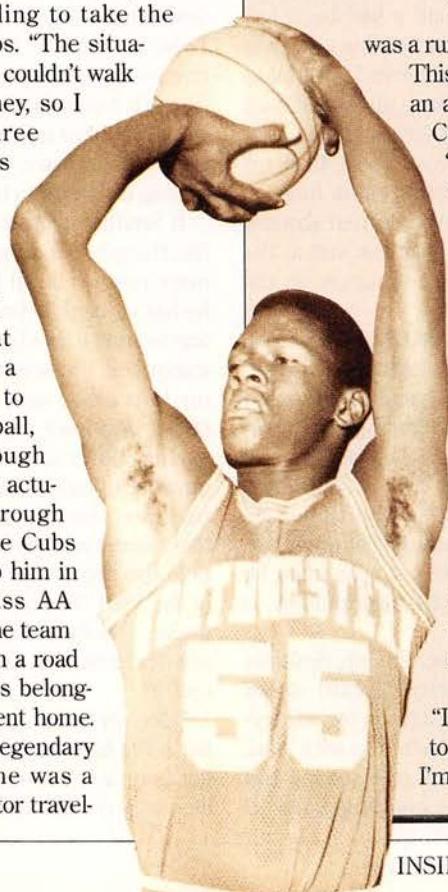
This way he has had the success in baseball and has the memories of an amateur basketball career that saw him go up against the likes of Calvin Natt in college and Robert Parish in high school and college.

"Parish played at Centenary when I was at Northwestern, and in high school he went to Woodlawn in Shreveport," says Smith. "They beat the hell out of us all the time. We were Class B and they were a big school, but we were so far out in the country we had to find someone to play. I'll tell you what, I'd like to have gotten 'the Chief' on a baseball field. It would have been different."

The collegiate basketball game Smith remembers most was against a Georgia Tech team that included John Salley. Smith hit a last-second shot that gave Northwestern State a victory. "I wasn't set up to be the scorer," he says. "I was the guard who got all the dirty jobs. But I got the shot and made it. It was fun being out there and playing against guys who went on to play in the NBA."

Being from Castor, a town with a population of 196 people and one traffic light—a yellow caution—Smith admits baseball opened his eyes to a new world. The biggest shock came that first summer, when the 17-year-old country kid joined the Cubs' rookie league team in Bradenton, Fla.

"I'd never seen Puerto Ricans or Dominicans before," says Smith. "I went up to those guys and thought they were brothers. I'm trying to get a basketball game together, and they couldn't speak English. I'm thinking, 'What kind of brothers are these?'" —T.R.



The Go-to-Guys

Major-league clubs love to have that big workhorse in the bullpen who can come in game after game and slam the door. Among pitchers who have been primarily full-time relievers since 1987, the White Sox's Bobby Thigpen leads the majors in saving the largest percentage of his team's wins. However, Lee Smith isn't far behind at No. 2.

Reliever	Team	Saves	Wins	Pct.
Bobby Thigpen	White Sox	184	425	.433
Lee Smith	White Sox	183	433	.423
Dennis Eckersley	Oakland A's	207	505	.410
John Franco	NY Mets	175	443	.395
Jeff Reardon	Red Sox	178	455	.391
Doug Jones	Red Sox	141	371	.380
Dave Righetti	Angels	144	420	.343
Tom Henke	Cardinals	155	487	.318
Mitch Williams	Phillies	117	419	.279
Dave Smith	Red Sox	116	422	.275
Dan Plesac	Indians	118	445	.265
Roger McDowell	Red Sox	105	449	.234
Randy Myers	Red Sox	106	476	.223
Jay Howell	Red Sox	97	457	.212
Tim Burke	Red Sox	90	434	.207
Mike Henneman	Red Sox	88	433	.203
Mark Davis	Red Sox	81	429	.189
Craig Lefferts	Red Sox	83	445	.187

Statistics from 1987 to '92, through June 18.

Compiled by Bob Kuenster

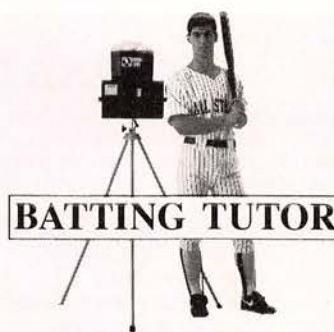
son, though, Smith has carried a tough-guy tag that only recently has been removed. "It's weird," he says of the reputation. "I guess in Chicago nobody knew how to approach me, so I didn't talk to many people. I never have been one to party or do a lot of interviews or card shows, but nobody has asked me to do many of them, either. I remember going to Boston and meeting Mike Greenwell. He told me, 'Man, I heard you were hard to get along with, but you're one of the nicest guys I've met.'

"I'll tell you what, not too many guys get along with Harry Caray, but I did. I just let Harry say what he had to say. I never had to get Harry out—he's not hitting—so he can have his opinions, and most of the things he said about me were good. He has his job to do, and I have mine. I'm not going to tell him how to do his."

For the past decade, Smith has taken care of his job more consistently than anybody in the history of the game. One of these days, who knows? Maybe the public actually will start to recognize him for what he's done. ■

Recognition isn't a problem for veteran baseball writer TRACY RINGOLSBY; we've known that he's a good one for years. Tracy's a longtime contributor to I.S.

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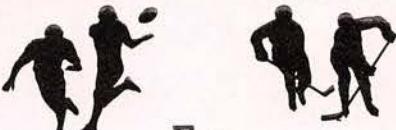
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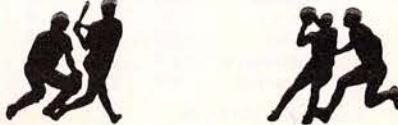
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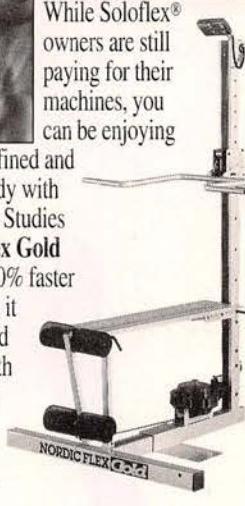
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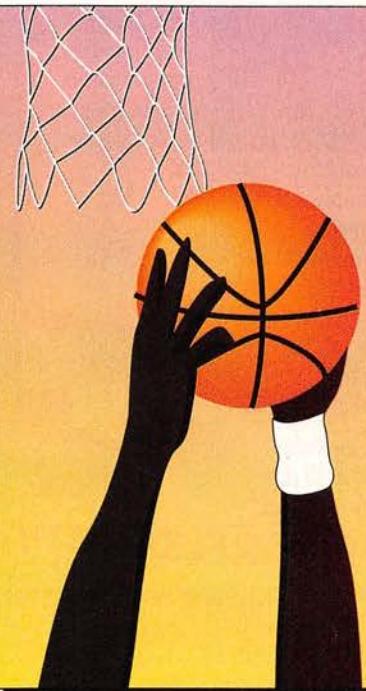
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NUMBERS



GREED IS GOOD

Dennis Rodman is the greediest rebounder in NBA history. Multiplying the total rebounds in the Pistons games he played in last season (7,001) by the percentage of available minutes Rodman was on the floor (83.44%) shows that he had a chance at 5,842 caroms. He nabbed 1,530 of those boards, or 26.2%, by far the best single-season mark ever. Here are the NBA's most efficient glass-cleaners of all time:

Season	Player, Team	Rebs.	Rebs. Avail.	Reb. Pct.
1991-92	Dennis Rodman, Pistons	1,530	5,842	26.2
1974-75	Swen Nater, Spurs*	1,279	5,447	23.5
1976-77	Moses Malone, Braves-Rockets	1,072	4,587	23.4
1978-79	Moses Malone, Rockets	1,444	6,222	23.2
1979-80	Swen Nater, Clippers	1,216	5,292	23.0
1987-88	Roy Tarpley, Mavericks	959	4,244	22.6
1991-92	Kevin Willis, Hawks	1,258	5,573	22.6
1973-74	Swen Nater, Squires-Spurs*	998	4,428	22.5
1977-78	Moses Malone, Rockets	886	3,974	22.3
1987-88	Charles Oakley, Bulls	1,066	4,907	21.7
1969-70	Mel Daniels, Pacers*	1,462	6,749	21.7
1982-83	Moses Malone, 76ers	1,194	5,546	21.5
1980-81	Larry Smith, Warriors	994	4,649	21.4
1990-91	Dennis Rodman, Pistons	1,026	4,809	21.3
1968-69	Wes Unseld, Bullets	1,491	7,015	21.3

*ABA

Compiled by Greg Thomas

SUMMER HEAT REPEAT?

As baseball entered the dog days last season, these players started to sizzle. Here are the top August averages for 1991; how many of these hitters will do it again this year?

Player, '92 Team	HRs	RBIs	Avg.
Shawn Dunston, Cubs.....	1	11	.427
Bill Spiers, Brewers.....	1	17	.386
Joe Orsulak, Orioles.....	0	11	.384
Greg Briley, Mariners.....	0	5	.382
Bobby Bonilla, Mets.....	3	20	.377
Ken Griffey Jr., Mariners.....	6	17	.377
Larry Walker, Expos.....	4	12	.376
Julio Franco, Rangers.....	2	15	.376
Frank Thomas, White Sox.....	8	27	.373
Willie Randolph, Mets.....	0	17	.371

Compiled by STATS, Inc.

CENTRAL SAVVY

Three Central Division teams—Cleveland, Chicago, and Charlotte—led the NBA last season in assist-to-turnover ratio, which measures how efficiently a team uses its possessions. Here are the best and worst ball-handling teams for the 1991-92 season:

BEST			
Team	Asst.	TO	Ratio
Cavaliers.....	2,260	1,073	2.11
Bulls.....	2,279	1,088	2.09
Hornets.....	2,284	1,273	1.79
Celtics.....	2,072	1,165	1.78
Suns.....	2,202	1,242	1.77

WORST			
Team	Asst.	TO	Ratio
Nuggets.....	1,553	1,447	1.07
Heat.....	1,749	1,377	1.27
Magic.....	1,792	1,389	1.29
Mavericks.....	1,630	1,202	1.36
Nets.....	1,937	1,392	1.39

POWER AND PRECISION

Joe DiMaggio stands alone with the most economical swing in major league history. Joltin' Joe hammered 361 career home runs while striking out only 369 times, a K-to-HR ratio of 1.02, tops among players with at least 200 homers. Here are the most—and least—acute slugging eyes ever in baseball, along with the marks of those players who were active at the start of the 1992 season and who entered the year with at least 200 career home runs:



ALL-TIME LEADERS

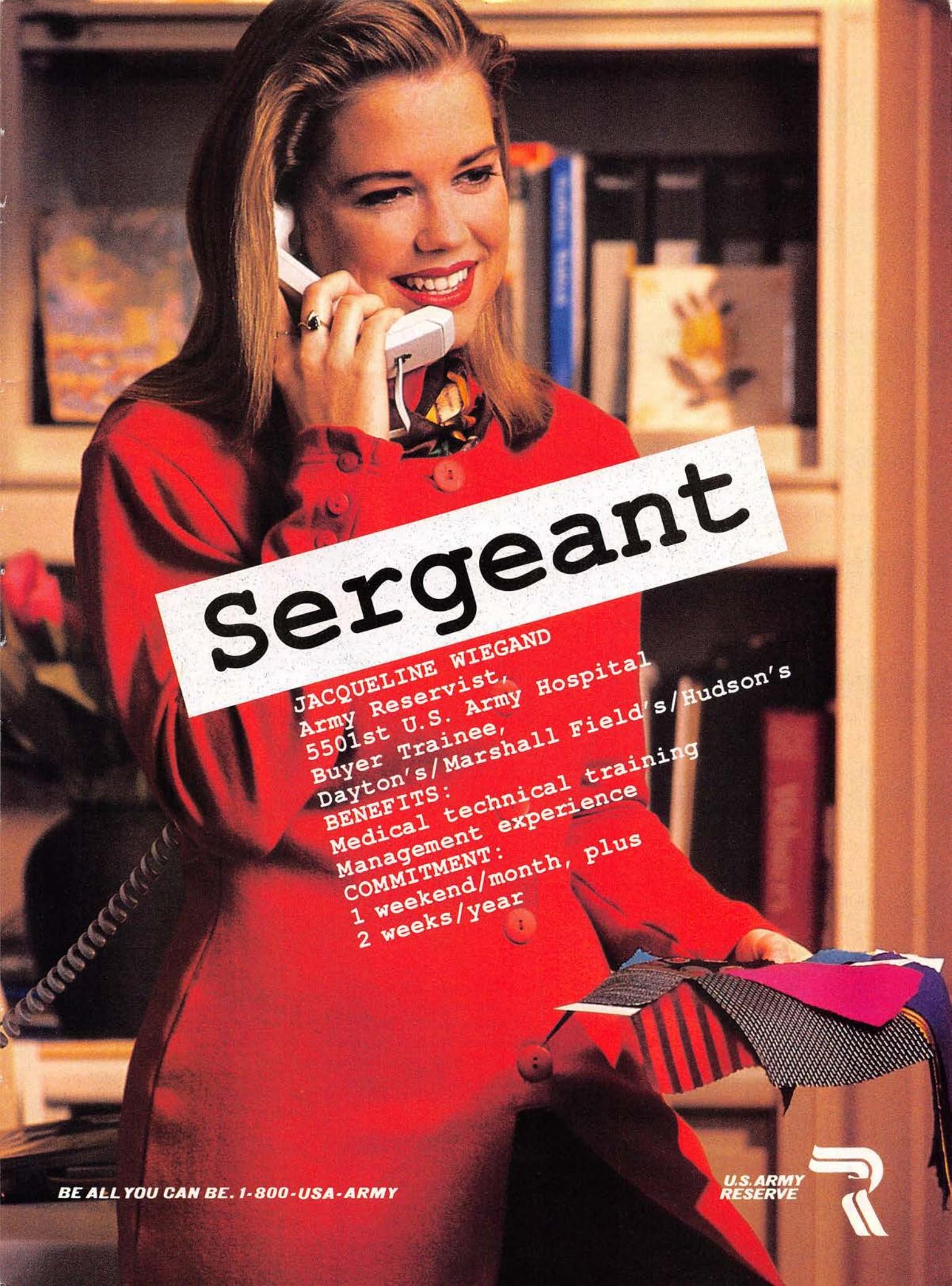
Player	K's	HRs	Ratio	Player	K's	HRs	Ratio
Joe DiMaggio	369	361	1.02	Rick Monday	1,513	241	6.28
Yogi Berra	414	358	1.16	Bobby Grich	1,278	224	5.71
Ted Kluszewski	365	279	1.31	Deron Johnson	1,318	245	5.38
Ted Williams	709	521	1.36	Larry Parrish	1,359	256	5.31
Bill Dickey	289	202	1.43	Bobby Bonds	1,757	332	5.29

CURRENT PLAYERS

Player	K's	HRs	Ratio	Player	K's	HRs	Ratio
Kent Hrbek	669	249	2.69	Brian Downing	1,082	269	4.02
George Brett	791	293	2.70	Tom Brunansky	996	242	4.12
George Bell	656	232	2.83	Jose Canseco	917	222	4.13
Cal Ripken	764	266	2.87	Jack Clark	1,402	338	4.15
Eddie Murray	1,182	404	2.93	Ryne Sandberg	902	213	4.23
Gary Carter	980	322	3.04	Harold Baines	979	228	4.29
Andre Dawson	1,308	385	3.40	Dale Murphy	1,733	398	4.35
Dave Winfield	1,444	415	3.48	Lance Parrish	1,394	308	4.53
Joe Carter	781	218	3.58	Gary Gaetti	1,013	222	4.56
Carlton Fisk	1,337	372	3.59	Robin Yount	1,209	239	5.06
Darryl Strawberry	1,107	285	3.88	Kirk Gibson	1,068	210	5.09
Pedro Guerrero	859	215	4.00	Jesse Barfield	1,232	241	5.11

Compiled by STATS, Inc.

Through June 8

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a bright red coat over a patterned scarf, is smiling and talking on a white cordless telephone. She is seated in front of a bookshelf filled with books.

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THE GOOD DOCTOR

Could you tell us what Indiana coach Bob Knight usually orders for dessert?

M.K., DURHAM, N.C.

Cool whips. Lots of cool whips.

Does NBC really have a new situation-comedy coming up this season about a Masters champion golfer who shares an apartment with a slob? What's it called?

D.L., MARCO, FLA.

"The Odd Couples." The part of the slob has not yet been cast, but producers are considering several sports writers.

Duke University will go for three in a row. What is the Blue Devils' slogan for basketball success?

G.H., EDENTON, N.C.

"Hurley to bed, Hurley to rise."

How worried were you about the rest of the NHL season being called off after the hockey players went on strike?

J.J., INVER GROVE HEIGHTS, MINN.

Oh, did hockey players go on strike? Nobody I know even noticed.

Even though Wesley and Woody were in great form, my favorite character in "White Men Can't Jump" was Rosie Perez. What did you think of her form?

A.M., ISLA VISTA, CALIF.

Talk about double jeopardy.

Could you please tell me the real name of baseball infielder Bip Roberts?

N.C., GERMANTOWN, OHIO

It is Roberts. Why would you ask that question?

World Cup soccer games in 1994 will be played at the Pontiac (Mich.) Silverdome—indoors. Soccer on artificial turf?

M.K., ECONOMY, PA.

On the contrary, the Silverdome intends to plant actual grass, which will grow just fine indoors. Unfortunately, the grounds crew will have to use artificial sunlight and artificial water.

Michael Jordan is writing a book? Hey, that sounds interesting. What can you tell us about it?

H.G., ESTILL, S.C.

Due out next month, Jordan's first novel, "The Sam Smith Rules," is actually a children's book about a golfer, Slammin' Sam, with magical shoes who leaps from hole to hole with his tongue out. Oh, by the way, Jordan will bet you \$10,000 that it's a best-seller.

Michigan's football team has the largest offensive linemen I've ever seen on one college line. Do you agree?

S.F., ROSEVILLE, MICH.

That's why they call them "the Flab Five."

How do you think Jerry Tarkanian's surprising decision to coach a pro basketball team in San Antonio will work out?

B.B., SPEARFISH, S.D.

I think within 30 days the Spurs will be on probation by the NBA.

In your expert opinion as a doctor, will the remarkable Bo Jackson ever play again?

R.S., PRICHARD, ALA.

He sure will. Just not baseball or football.



What's the mystery?
Roberts is Roberts.

Storms with thunder and lightning have interrupted several major golf tournaments, including the U.S. Open and the Masters. Tell us, Doc: What's

the most electrifying storm you've ever been around?

M.D., FAIRMOUNT, N.Y.

Hannah.

Is up-and-coming basketball star Cherokee Parks of Duke of American Indian descent or what?

G.T.O., HUGO, OKLA.

No, I believe he's of Jeep descent.

As a female subscriber I don't mind the swimsuits, but how about showing us some men? I'd just love to see a picture of you in a skimpy bathing suit, Doc!

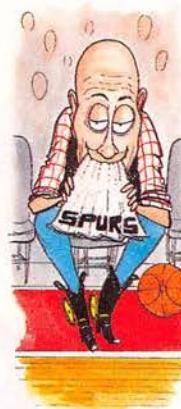
V.A., HARDIN, MONT.

Nah. We'd need a bigger magazine.

Is it true that you refuse to spend money to watch the Olympics on television and prefer instead to read the newspaper?

C.B., CROMWELL, CONN.

Correct. I call it "Paper View."



Easy, Tark. It's OK
to pay these guys.

You've been following horse racing for a very long time, Doc. What's the longest race you've ever seen?

W.L., COTULLA, TEXAS

Probably the A.P. Indy 500.

We've been looking for a motto describing our pitching staff to put on advertising billboards around Atlanta. Got a suggestion?

L.G., HAPEVILLE, GA.

How about "Glavine and Avery and Pray for Bravery"?

Hey there, Doctor, would you happen to have the address and telephone number of that woman who appeared on the cover of the most recent INSIDE SPORTS swimsuit issue?

M.H., HOLLY SPRINGS, MISS.

Yeah, I do. And I'm keeping it.

Generally, how do people around the NBA assess Shaquille O'Neal's chances next season?

R.C., LEESVILLE, LA.

Generally, they believe that Shaquille O'Neal and four towel boys could beat the Minnesota Timberwolves, night after night after night.

Pittsburgh dominated the NFL for a number of seasons. Do the Steelers have four more Super Bowl championships in their future?

C.N., HAMPTON, VA.

No doubt about it. My guess would be: 1998, 2012, 2038, and 2092. ■

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THE FAN

By DENNIS MILLER

Touched By the Man Upstairs

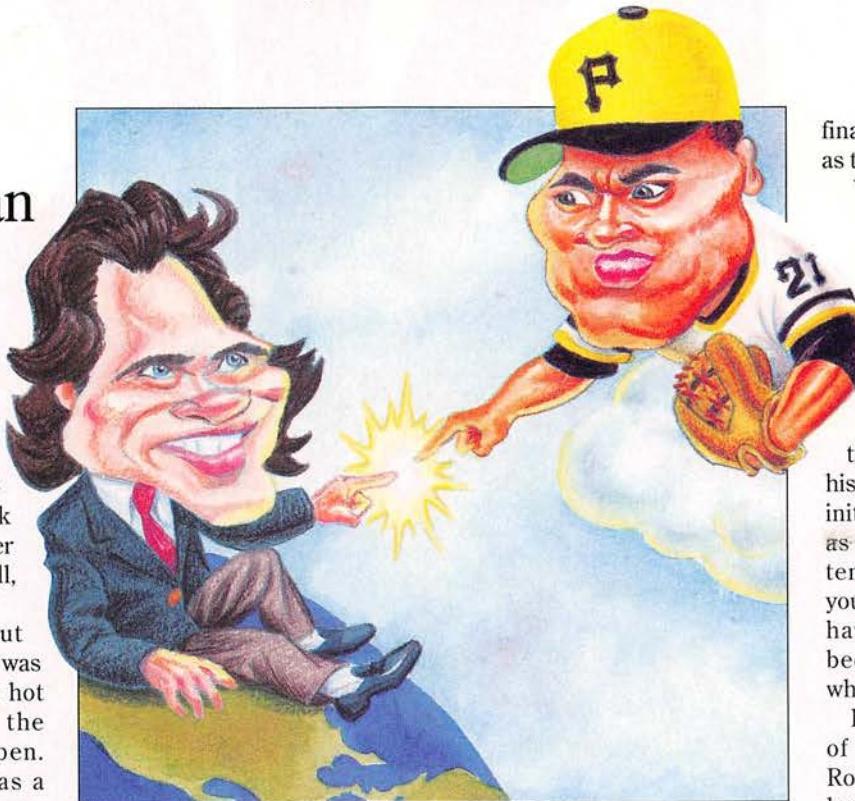
I'M 38 NOW, AND I grew up at the best time a kid could grow up in Pittsburgh in terms of sports. I saw probably the best football team ever, and I think I saw the greatest player in the history of baseball, Roberto Clemente.

I remember going out to Forbes Field when I was young. We used to get hot dogs and sit behind the opposing team's bullpen. The memory I have as a youth of sports was Clemente—just that regal bearing. I remember him cutting second on his way to third just literally looking

airborne. I remember him going back to right-center and just laser-beaming it, a no-hopper, the ball arriving at home so far ahead of the runner that you couldn't believe the ball was there. I would think, "Geez, that is the greatest arm that ever played baseball."

I used to think of Clemente as a figure who was touched by God or something. The fact that he finished with exactly 3,000 hits and then died doing philanthropic work for his fellow man points out to me that in some way he probably deserved the sainthood that he enjoyed in Pittsburgh. The fact that he got to 3,000 and then it all ended points out to me that God had good plans for him. Clemente standing on second base with that neck cocked and hat up in the air after his 3,000th—some double into the gap—and I get goosebumps just thinking about it.

I don't see the burning desire to be great like I used to in baseball. I don't think there's that need to be great. You can be good and make \$5 million a year. It takes a real step up mentally and physically to become a great player. When somebody hands you \$2 million and



The fact that Clemente reached 3,000 hits and then died doing philanthropic work told me that in some way he deserved his sainthood in Pittsburgh.

you're hitting .240, you think, "Well, I think I'll camp out here for a while and won't get hurt." Now I don't think players sit there one day and say, "I'm not going to try"; I really think it happens on a much deeper level than that.

Baseball's a game that's burned into your earliest memories, so of course to me Clemente's the greatest. As a 10-year-old I wasn't really thinking about what a good man he was; that all set in later in life. As a kid you admire the fact that he could go down the line and basket-catch, pivot, and gun to third. He had a pride about him. He didn't like to be trifled with.

The year the Pirates beat the O's for the championship in 1971 I went to Game 6 in Baltimore. I remember the guy next to me saying, "You better get a good look at our pitcher early, because as he gets more tired as the game goes on his scrooge really starts working." Clemente homered early in the game to get us on the board. I turned to the guy and said, "Early enough?" He never disappointed you. I believe he had 12 hits that Series, he was a genius in the outfield, and he

finally established himself as the superstar he was.

When I heard of Clemente's death, I was too shocked to let in exactly what had happened. Nothing went on in Pittsburgh that day—the city had no heartbeat. I was tremendously affected by his death. It was one of the initial acquaintances I had as a young man with the temporal nature of what you have here. You really have to live in the day because you never know what's going to happen.

I'm into the visceral part of what it was like to be Roberto Clemente, so I'd have asked him just what it feels like to go deep into the gap, make a catch, throw to second, and then put your head down and

walk back before the throw got there, that sort of theatrics. I'd try to get in his head and ask him to elaborate on just how that feels, how that must just cut through all the crap. I used to watch him walk back after throwing to second, and I'd get chills thinking how good it must feel to be able to do that.

He's always been an immortal, the biggest hero in that town. He might have topped out at 3,500 hits, but I don't think he ever would have been recognized as the best player in general. I've heard people say that; maybe it's a Pittsburgh thing. Pittsburgh is definitely more of a football town, by light years, and that tells you something about how great Clemente was—he captured a generation. But I don't think he had the RBIs, or the stolen bases, or the homers to really be thought up there in the pantheon. To me, though, as a kid just watching his athleticism, I'd say he was the greatest player ever. ■

Besides hosting his own late-night talk show (aptly named "The Dennis Miller Show"), DENNIS MILLER took the time to emcee the MTV Movie Awards in June.

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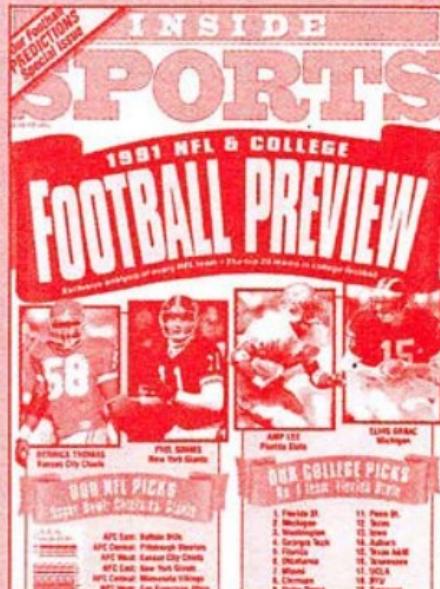
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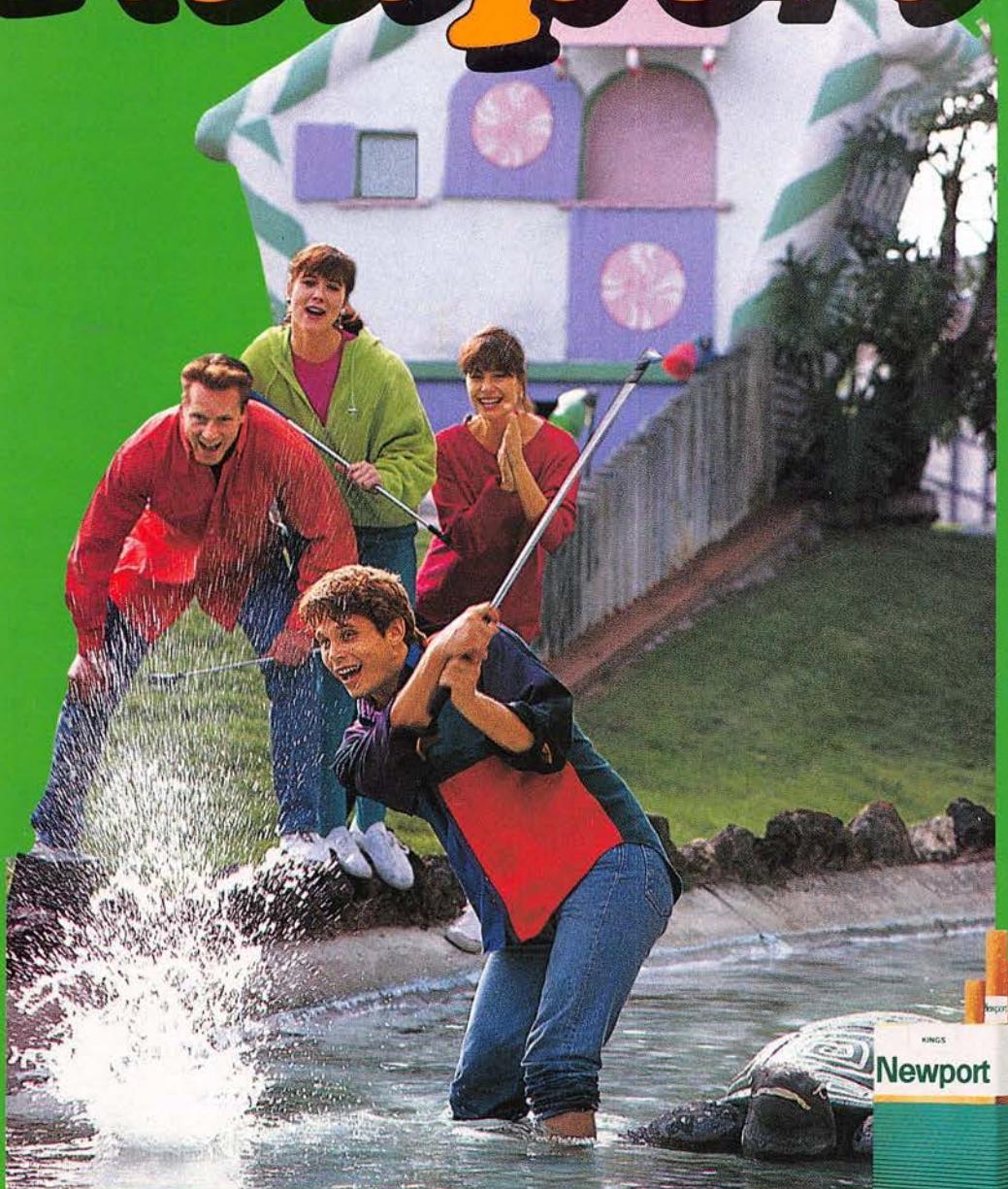
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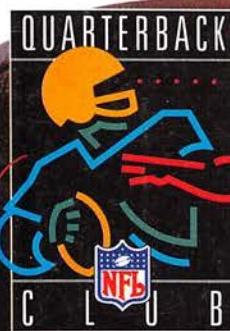
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